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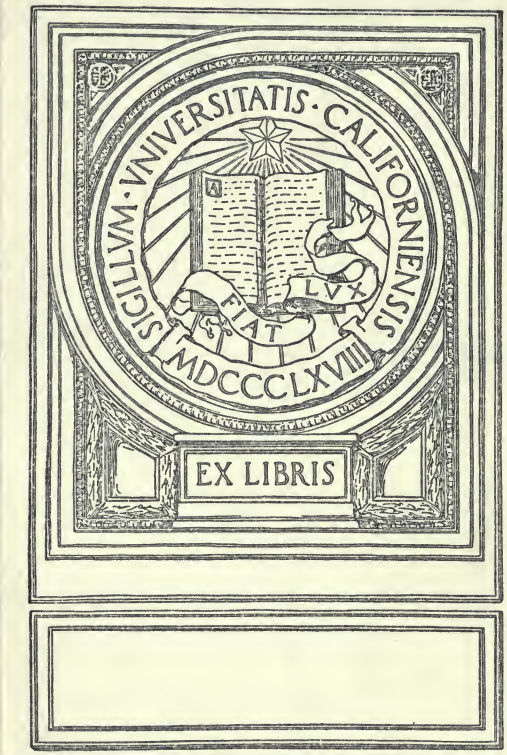
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DR. BEECHER'S

VIEWS IN THEOLOGY.

VIEWS

IN

THEOLOGY.

BY

LYMAN BEECHER, D. D.
PRESIDENT OF LANE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST

OF

THE SYNOD OF CINCINNATI.

CINCINNATI:
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INTRODUCTION.

TO THE SYNOD OF CINCINNATI.

BELOVED BRETHREN:

I AVAIL myself of the earliest opportunity permitted by prior engagements, to comply with your request, 'that I would publish at as early a day as possible, a concise statement of the argument and design of my Sermon on Native Depravity, and of my views of total depravity, original sin, and regeneration, agreeably to my declaration and explanation before Synod.' I am cheered in this attempt by the consideration that the Synod 'saw nothing in my views, as explained by myself, to justify any suspicion of unsoundness in the faith,' and expressed their entire satisfaction with the terms of my acquiescence in their decision, and their belief that nothing insuperable remained to prevent my usefulness, or impair confidence in me, as a minister of the gospel in the Presbyterian church. I am cheered, because, though my doctrinal opinions have been unchanged from the beginning, and have been published often, and are in accordance, as I suppose, with the received expositions of the Confession of Faith, and the Bible, and have seemed to receive some token of Divine approbation, and as eternity approaches are increasingly precious to my own soul, it is nevertheless true that I had fallen under suspicions. The causes of these suspicions, I shall not stop to explain; nor am I disposed to regard them with entire disapprobation. In one view, I regard them with pleasure, as evidence of a

wakeful zeal for the truth, for want of which in a generation past, innovations and heresies were permitted insidiously to invade portions of the church.

But who does not know that upon the very confines of honest zeal for the truth, lie the territories of twilight, and suspicion, and rumor, and fear, and whisperings, and false accusations, by which confidence is undermined, and very friends separated?

The strength of the church, under God, depends on concentrated action; and this, like mercantile credit, depends on confidence. Whatever, therefore, propagates distrust among brethren, creates a panic, like the failure of capitalists in a great city. Of this, the enemy of souls is aware; and has never failed, when the power of the church became too formidable to be resisted, to ease him of his adversaries, by dividing them. Thus the sacramental controversy divided the reformers, and the contentions of the Independents and Presbyterians lost the vantage ground in the commonwealth, and brought back monarchy, dissoluteness, and irreligion.

In this nation, for a long time, the kindred denominations, Congregational and Presbyterian, lived in peace and good fellowship, and were doing valiantly their part in filling the land with churches and temples, and pastors and revivals, and seemed to bid defiance to his wiles. But at length the storm has smitten us, and with a fury proportioned to our power of annoyance to the kingdom of darkness. I was not unapprised of the beginning of this evil, when I consented to come into the Presbyterian church; but its subsequent developments have indeed outrun all expectation, and have reached a crisis deeply afflicting, humiliating, and alarming. Extensively, confidence has ceased, and misapprehension, and suspicion, and alienation, and contention have entered. In this condition of the church, though pressed beyond measure by other responsibilities, there is no effort, or sacrifice, or self-denial which I would not make joyfully, to extend correct information, allay suspicion, extinguish animosity,

stop contention, and by purity and peace, and concentrated action, make her prosperity like the waves of the sea.

It will not be easy, however, to illustrate my views on the subjects named, in the form of independent dissertations, without the danger of alleged discrepancy. Nor do I understand it to be the wish of the Synod that I should confine myself to the exact limits and language of my defence. I have chosen, therefore, to follow the order, and extensively the language of my defence from copious notes, adding such illustrations and topics as I had prepared, but a regard to brevity compelled me to omit. Making such an exhibition, however as will, in the best manner, answer the design of the Synod, in putting the community in possession of my doctrinal views on the subjects named.

I cannot, however, forbear to remark, that the necessity of explanation imposed on me at this time of life by unfounded accusations, is not unlike calling on an aged merchant of long-established reputation, to prove his honesty, by the exhibition of his books; or a physician of age and experience, to repel the suspicion of quackery, by publishing an account of his cases and his practice. I am happy, however, to say, that it is not the fault of the Synod, that such a necessity exists, and that all which I requested or hoped, was illustrated in the kind and candid manner in which the trial was conducted.

VIEWS IN THEOLOGY.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

MODERATOR:

IT gives me pleasure to express the confidence which I feel in the christian integrity of this court. It is possible for man to be so biased by interest, or swayed by passion, or bound by party, as to supersede the vision of evidence, or its efficacy, when it is seen. But no member of this court has, I trust, placed himself in this predicament. Is there one of you who would be sorry, should the evidence of my innocence be made to appear; who would not rejoice, should he find his suspicions allayed, and his fears averted? Is there a man in this court who would not as soon cut his hand off, as to lift it against me contrary to his honest convictions? Would any thing be more grateful to your heart, than to see the court united in the acquittal of Dr. Wilson and myself, and all of us united in building up the cause of Christ in the West?

You are aware, however, that integrity of purpose does not guaranty infallibility of judgment; and that rumors, and suspicions, and prejudgment from ex parte hearsay testimony, which have no place in the decisions of this tribunal, are extremely apt, through human imperfection, to thrust themselves in the

scales, and bias seriously the judgment. This perverting influence of preconceived opinion, formed upon testimony disallowed by law, is so common and so powerful, that in criminal cases in civil courts, no man is permitted to sit in judgment who has formed an opinion touching the merits of the case. In ecclesiastical trials for heresy at the present time, there is a peculiar liability to the evil bias of a prejudgment, when accusations long and loud have filled the land, and roused suspicion, and created panic, and undermined confidence, and multiplied aggression and exasperation, and brought on the symptoms in our church of an approaching dissolution. Zeal for the truth, and divided responsibility of numbers, and the fear of suspicion of heresy, if any falter, may embolden men to act upon impressions made by testimony out of court which is not entitled to the weight of a straw. It is this extrajudicial evidence, without the forms of the law, which is invading the life and reputation of our citizens, and shaking the foundations of our republic.

This summary justice, should it enter the church, would annihilate all protection against prejudice and passion, and perpetrate injustice as much more detestable than civil outrage, as the church is bound by a special obligation to be kind, and unimpassioned, and impartial; and whenever the time comes that innocence and evidence are no guarantee of a minister's reputation in the church, the day of her dissolution is at the door.

I have no disposition to interrogate the members

of this Synod, whether they have formed an opinion touching the merits of this appeal. But you, brethren, have a right to ask your own heart how it is, and to watch and pray that you do not permit a kind of evidence to prevail, which all laws, human and divine, reject, as tending to anarchy and despotism.

I have only to request, then, that you will not decide this appeal on the ground of any impressions from biases or prejudices produced out of court. It is here, by evidence to be produced in court, under the guardianship of our excellent system of discipline and laws of evidence, that you will enlighten your understandings and decide.

You will be careful not to ascribe to me opinions which I never believed or taught, because I may have employed language in another part of the church, which, to ears unaccustomed to it, may seem erroneous. If there be, at the same time, an obvious meaning in accordance with truth and my own declarations, charity and equity alike forbid that I should be denied the benefit and meaning I claim, and be made answerable for that which I disclaim and abhor.

You will by no means hold me guilty in propagating opinions which you yourselves hold and teach, though from difference of location and education we may differ a little in the terms employed to explain and enforce them.

Especially will you be careful that you do not convict me of heresy for opinions I have never avowed, and have always disclaimed, and of which there is no evidence but suspicion, in or out of court

Avowed and proved opinions should be the ground of decision.

—merely upon the apprehension that all is not out—that something is covered and kept back, which, if I am spared, will by and by come out and punish the church. Most assuredly I have no concealed heresies. I hold no opinions which I do not avow. ALL IS OUT. I am determined to be understood, length and breadth, and from top to bottom. If my doctrinal belief is adverse to the Confession of Faith, as immemorially explained, I am not only not reluctant to go out of the Presbyterian church, but I am determined not to stay in it.

Finally, you will be careful to decide on the ground of my opinions avowed and proved, and not on the ground of my suspected affinities with the assumed heresies of other men. I have refused always to be made accountable for the language or opinions of other men. For my own statements I am accountable. They are the symbols of my faith—whatever accords with them I admit, and whatever differs from them, I disclaim as having anything to do with my creed or teaching.

The comprehensive charge against me is, that I hold and teach Pelagian and Arminian doctrines, in respect to the subject of Free Agency, and Accountability, Original Sin, Total Depravity, Regeneration and Christian Character, contrary to the Confession, and the word of God.

NATURAL ABILITY.

I COMMENCE with the subject of Free Agency, or the Natural Ability of man, as the foundation of obligation and moral government.

I begin with this first, because it is, as Dr. Wilson has said, 'the hinge of the whole controversy.' This is eminently true. It is the different theories of free agency and accountability which have, in all ages, agitated the church. There is not a discussion about doctrine, at this time, in the Presbyterian church, which does not originate in discrepant opinions respecting the created constitutional powers of man as a free agent, and the grounds of moral obligation and personal accountability. Settle the philosophy of free agency—what are the powers of a free agent?—how they are put together, and how they operate in personal accountable action—and controversy among all the friends of Christ will cease. It has been often said, that it never can be settled. I believe no such thing. The perplexities of the schoolmen are passing away, and the symptoms of approximation to an enlightened and settled opinion among all evangelical denominations are beginning to appear. I have no discoveries to

publish on this subject—no favorite views of my own to propagate. It has been my great desire to finish my course and keep the faith without any. The doctrines of free agency and natural ability, which I hold and advocate, have been the revealed doctrines of the church from the beginning. They are not new divinity, nor new school—and though I am compelled to admit that there are some in the church who, when they are correctly explained, do not hold them; the number in my belief is very small, who do not, when all misapprehension is removed, believe the doctrines just as I believe them. They are also fundamental doctrines, which, if misinterpreted, will always environ the Calvinistic system with invincible prejudice and odium without, and fill it with fierce conflicts within. But when correctly understood, will pour the stream of truth pure and full and clear as chrystal, through all the channels of the associated system.

The doctrine claimed by the prosecutor as the true doctrine of the Confession and the Bible is, that to fallen man there remains no ability of any kind or degree to obey the gospel—that though he is a free agent, it is a free agency which includes no ability of any kind to obey God—and that none is necessary to constitute perfect obligation to obey, and perfect accountability for disobedience. That the obligation to obey may be infinite, and the punishment for disobedience just and eternal, where the obedience claimed is a natural impossibility as really as the creation of the world, or the raising of the dead. That I may not be supposed to mistake or misrepresent, I quote

my own and the language of Dr. Wilson, as it occurred before Presbytery, and is correctly reported.

Dr. B.—'Dr. Wilson has made a distinct avowal, that free agency and moral obligation to obey law do not include *any ability of any kind*.'

Dr. W.—'I limited that avowal to man in his fallen state.'

Dr. B.—'Yes, so I understood it. We are talking about man in his fallen state. Dr. Wilson then admits, that it requires no *ability of any sort* in fallen man, to make him an accountable agent, and a subject of God's moral government.'

Dr. W.—'With respect to fallen man, *I do*.'

Now it must be admitted, that in this avowal, Dr. Wilson has the merit of magnanimous honesty. He is fairly out on a subject where, with many a man for an opponent, I should have had to ferret him out. There can at least be no doubt as to what Dr. Wilson does hold. If we are to go to Synod, this point will be clear; and when the report is published, no man can misunderstand this part of it. It is seldom that we meet a man who would be willing to march right up to such a position, without winking or mystification. But Dr. Wilson has done it unflinchingly and thoroughly. He interprets the Confession of Faith and the Bible as teaching that God may and does command men to perform natural impossibilities; and justly punish them for ever, for not obeying! though they could no more obey than they could create a world! And he has riveted the matter by his mental philosophy of the will. Instead of supposing a mind

with powers of agency, acting freely in view of motives, he supposes the will to be entirely dependent on the constitution and condition of body and mind, and external circumstances; and controlled by these as absolutely as straws on the bosom of a river are controlled by the motions of the water.*

It is claimed, then, by the prosecutor, that the Confession of Faith and the Bible teach, that fallen man has no ability of any kind to obey God, and that none is necessary to perfect obligation and the just desert of eternal punishment.

Now my alleged heresy consists in believing and teaching, that the constitutional powers of a free agent, including the possibility of their correct exercise in obedience, is necessary to moral obligation, and reward and punishment, under the benevolent, wise, and just government of God.

And I do hold and teach, that while to a just *liability* to all the consequences of the fall on our constitution and character, no ability of any kind on our part to prevent or avert the curse existed, or was necessary—the evil coming on us, his posterity, as the curse of his disobedience through our constituted relation

* Dr. Wilson has said that the reporter has not done him justice. How? Is not the dialogue verbatim as it took place? How has injustice been done? Does he hold, that fallen man does possess ability of some kind to obey as the foundation of moral obligation? Then let him withdraw the charge of heresy on this point, for this is all I hold; and if he does not admit this, let him state in what respect he has been misrepresented—for it is a point on which there is no middle ground. But Dr. Wilson will not say that his dialogue, as reported, is not correct.

to him as our federal head—yet, to a personal accountability to law and desert of punishment, ability of some kind or degree is certainly indispensable. Some possibility of obedience in adult man is indispensable to personal obligation and a just punishment for transgression. Liability to be involved in the consequences, natural and moral, of the conduct of those who represent us, is a law of human society, and probably a law of the social, intelligent universe —and as it existed and operated in the case of Adam and his posterity, is doubtless a wise, benevolent, and just constitution. But while a liability to suffer the consequences of another's conduct, on the ground of a just constitution of things, demands no ability to avert the evil; accountability for personal transgression does require some ability to refuse the evil and choose the good. There must be the faculties and powers of a free agent, bearing the relation of possibility to right action. Faculties that can do nothing, and powers that have no relation of a cause to its effect, in possible action, are nonentities. A free agency that cannot act at all in any way, is no free agency; and a free agency, that has no power of right action, is in that respect no free agency. There must be an agent qualified to act as he is required to act—something in his constitution which qualifies him to be governed by law, and rewards and punishments—as matter and animals are not qualified. There must be something which qualifies for obedience and creates obligation which renders obedience possible, and makes it reasonable that it should be rendered

and rewarded, and just that disobedience should be punished.

Now I have taught and I do hold, that the mind of man, though in a fallen state, is still endued by its Creator 'with that natural liberty that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined to good or evil, nor is violence offered to the will of the creature'—nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes (i. e. the power of the soul to choose life or death in the view of motives,) taken away, but rather established. This is what I mean, and all I mean, by the natural ability of man to obey the gospel. Material causes, while upheld by heaven, are adequate to their proper effects; and the mind of man, though fallen, is, while upheld, a cause sufficient in respect to the possibility of obedience to create infinite obligation. The fall perverted, but did not destroy the free agency of man. Perverted the use of his powers in action, but did not destroy the existence of those powers which distinguish man as a subject of moral government from animals, and lie at the foundation of all obligation. This is my alleged heresy; and to decide that it is a heresy, is to decide that the Confession of Faith and the Bible teach, that to fallen man, no ability of any sort is necessary to constitute infinite obligation, and a just desert of eternal punishment.

But while I thus insist on the existence of the commensurate powers of an agent, as essential to free agency and accountability, I do not believe, and have never taught, that actual obedience is essential

to free agency, or that the free agency which suffices to create a perfect obligation to obey, ever suffices without the special influence of the Holy Spirit to secure in fallen man even the lowest degree of holy, actual obedience. On the contrary, I hold and teach, that such a change in the constitution of man was produced by the fall, as creates a universal and prevalent propensity to actual sin—to the setting of the affections on things below, and loving the creature more than God—preventing in all men the existence of holiness, and securing the existence of that actual, total depravity, which is enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be—a bias which prevents the power of all truth and motives to reconcile men to God till its power is overcome by the special influence of the Holy Spirit in regeneration; and though impaired by that event, still remains in the regenerate until removed entirely by the Spirit, in making the soul of the saint meet for heaven. I only say with our Confession, that this bias to actual sin acts not in the form of a coercive cause; creating a fatal and irresistible necessity of sinning, and of course constitutes no excuse for actual sin, and no mitigation of the curse due to it, or abatement of God's boundless mercy in providing redemption for incorrigible man. This impediment to obedience, arising from a prevalent bias of nature and actual aversion to spiritual obedience, is called in the Confession and the Bible, inability to obey on account, as I suppose, of the same absolute certainty between their existence and the result, that appertains to natural causes and their

effects; and it is called a moral inability to indicate that though wrong, as securing wrong action with unfailing certainty, it does so not by a fatal necessity of sinning, but by an unnecessary, unreasonable, inexcusable aversion of the soul to God and his reasonable service.

While I teach, therefore, the ability of man as a free agent, and as the ground of obligation, I teach his moral inability as a sinner—the subject of the carnal mind which is enmity against God—not subject to his law, neither indeed can be.

In the true sense of the terms as employed in the Confession, and in the Bible, and in the common and well understood language of men, I teach that, 'no mere man since the fall has been able perfectly to keep the commandments of God—and that the natural man cannot understand and know the things of the Spirit of God, because they are spiritually discerned—and that no man can come to Christ, except the Father draw him.'

I proceed now to show, that the preceding account of man's free agency, and natural ability, and of his total depravity and moral impotency, are the doctrine of our Confession, and of the Bible.

The point at issue is not, whether fallen man ever did, or ever will, act right, in a spiritual sense, without the regeneration of the Holy Spirit. It is admitted, and insisted, and to be proved, that he never did, and never will. The point at issue is—in what manner the certainty of the continuous wrong action of the mind comes to pass? Does it come to

pass coerced or uncoerced by necessity? Does fallen man choose, under the influence of such a constitution of body, and mind, and motive, that every volition bears the relation of an effect to a natural and necessary cause, rendering any other choice than the one which comes to pass impossible in existing circumstances? Or is fallen man still an agent, so constituted that in every act of choice he is unconstrained and uncoerced by any necessity, like that which binds natural effects to their causes? Is the soul so exempt from the laws of a natural necessity, that it is never forced to choose wrong; there existing in every case the possibility and obligation growing out of the possibility of a different, or contrary choice? The latter is the view of free agency and accountability which I shall endeavor to establish, as the doctrine of the Confession and the Bible; and,

I. There is no reason to doubt that God is able to create free agents, who being sustained and placed under the illumination and influence of his laws and perfect government, shall be able to obey or disobey in the regular exercise of the powers of their own mind.

The alleged impossibility of created self-existing agents acting independently of God, does not touch the point: for the supposition of agency able to choose the good and refuse the evil, does not imply the mind's self-existence, but the efficacy of its powers, while upheld; and it might as well be said that God cannot create natural causes, which, while he

upholds them, can, by their own power, produce an effect, as that he cannot create mind, which, while upheld by him, is capable of acting right or wrong, under the requirements and motives of his government; both lead to pantheism, denying all created causes, and making God the only cause and the only agent in the universe.

There is no perceptible difficulty in creating mind, more than in creating matter—in creating active, than passive existence—or thinking, than unthinking —voluntary, than involuntary being. It is just as conceivable that God should create mind endowed with an energy which, while it is sustained, is commensurate to every requisite action under his government, by its own power, as that he should create passive matter, dependent for every movement and change on external causation.

How God can originate existence of any kind, is incomprehensible, but no one can prove it to be impossible. The creation of an intelligent universe, of free, accountable minds, capable of all the responsibilities of a perfect, eternal government, is just as conceivable therefore, as the creation of hills and valleys, plants and animals.

II. If it be possible to create and govern mind upon the principles of free agency, and a perfect and permanent moral government, the presumption is strong that this is in fact the divine plan. What other conceivable course could the wisdom of God devise, so comprehensive of good, as the creation of a universe of mind, with its constitutional susceptibilities, and

active, and social, and voluntary powers; qualified for all the results of a government of perfect laws, perfectly administered?

It is self-evident that the creation of unorganized matter could not illustrate the copiousness and power of the Divine benevolence. God might amuse himself with curious workmanship, but how could he impart happiness to unorganized matter? It is equally clear that mere *animal life* falls, in its capacity of enjoyment, unspeakably below the capabilities of mind. How limited is the range of the monotonous appetites! How narrow the circle of mere fleeting, instinctive action; and how feeble the momentary tie of natural affection, compared with its corroboration by ties of blood, and habits of intercourse, and the illumination of reason, and the powers of memory, and the light of an anticipated eternity, of unextinguished, purified, augmented and reciprocated friendship!

How immeasurable is that expansion of capacity in man, above the animal, which opens the eye of his intellect upon the character, will, and government of God; which brings him into fellowship with his Maker, and opens before him the joys of a blessed immortality; associated with a reasonable service, and benevolent activity, under the high and perfect guidance of heaven.

A single mind, through a duration which will never end, may be capable of more enjoyment than it were, in the nature of things, possible to pour through the narrow channels of animal instinct

and appetite. The river of pleasure is of course represented as flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb, i. e. as being the result of his intelligent creation and moral government; what an ocean of blessedness, compared to the drops of the bucket, which any other conceivable mode of being could have received! A universe, that can live in the past, present, and future, and experience a copiousness and variety of blessedness unknown to the moping animal—to have stopped at the limits of animalism, and forborne to create mind, would have been to prefer the ray to the sun—the atom to the universe. It would seem to be manifest and certain, then, that for the most perfect manifestation of his wisdom and benevolence, the Supreme Intelligence would call into being around him, other beings like himself, to hold communion with him and with one another, and after his own illustrious example to be made happy by their own benevolent activity in doing good; would create *mind*—and wake up intelligence round about his throne, for the mirrors of creation to throw back the light of his glory upon—hearts to burn with love, and wills to obey, and energy to act, with high deservings of good or evil—a universe so powerful in intellect as to be able to look with open face and steadfast vision upon the strong light of his glory, and so capacious of heart as to be able to receive the tide of joy which his benevolence shall pour through the soul—so energetic as to sustain the strong emotion which his excellence produces, and to perform for ever untiringly the glorious work of

benevolence—and so free that all its actions under the guidance of law shall be its own, and invested with all the attributes of a perfect accountability, which, in all its consequences of good or evil shall reach through eternity—*social*, also, we should expect it to be, holding affectionate communion with God and other minds; capable of moral excellence and all the fulness of perfect friendship and society. Obliterate conscious intelligence, and voluntariness, and accountability from the human mind—disrobe it of its spontaneous affections, and mutual complacencies, and you put down the race to the mere caricature of manhood.

There must exist the power of intellect, perception, comparison, judgment, conscience, will, affections, taste, memory, the discursive power of thought, the semi-omnipotence of volition, and those exercises of soul which constitute personal excellence and inspire affection.

It is only in the possession of these powers that individual happiness is enjoyed. Convince a man that he is only the instinctive animal of a day, and you brutalize him. We love and are beloved, admire and are admired; we are praised or blamed on the ground of a real mental energy of our own, capable of such high and eternal responsibilities. Blot out the intelligence and spontaneous affection of husband and wife, of parent and child, and the family is ruined; the moral attractions cease; its sun goes down, and it becomes a den of animals.

In the nature of things, the existence of a universe

Free agents have power to choose life or death.

of mind, of free agents, of rational, social, accountable beings, would seem to be indispensable to the highest illustration and expression of the goodness of God.

III. God has actually made free agents who were able in the exercise of their created powers to choose either way—life or death.

This is the doctrine of our Confession and Catechisms. 'Man in his state of innocency had freedom and power to will and to do that which is good and well pleasing to God; but yet mutably so that he might fall from it.'—*Confess. Ch.* ix. *Sec.* 2.

'Our first parents being left to the freedom of their own will, fell from the state wherein they were created, by sinning against God.'—*Shorter Catechism*, p. 322.

It is the testimony of the Bible: 'Lo, this only have I found that God made man upright—but he sought out many inventions.'—*Ecc.* vii. 29.

It is a part of the recorded history of the intelligent universe, and of God's moral government, that the *angels* kept not their first estate—and that man being in honor abode not.

Now had Adam, created holy, been free to choose obedience *only*, and *that* by a natural, constitutional, unavoidable necessity, so that by the power of natural causation, his choice must be in accordance with his character and constitution of mind, and the constitution of things around him, or the active principle which prevailed in his nature when volition took place; how could he be said to have power to will

The Fall did not destroy the constitutional powers of free agency.

that which is good, yet mutably so that he might fall from it, and how could he possibly fall? But he had power to stand and power to fall; and that is the essence of free agency, and was the ground of his accountability.

IV. Nothing is apparent in the nature of the fall from which to infer necessarily the destruction of the constitutional powers of free agency in Adam, or his posterity. It was an overt act—an actual sin. 'In evil hour he put forth the hand and plucked and ate the fruit forbidden.' But does actual sin destroy the possibility of right action? It creates aversion—it secures the certainty under law of continuance in evil if unreclaimed by a mediator and almighty power. But does it do this by a constitutional necessity, like the power of a natural cause to its effect? If so, the adulterer, and the drunkard, and the liar, would like to alleviate their remorse and quiet their fearful looking for of fiery indignation, by the consoling information that the more they live after the flesh, the deeper the oblivion of accountability, and crime, and punishment.

But the Bible nowhere teaches, and the Confession expressly denies, that Adam or his posterity lost their powers of agency by the fall, and became impotent to good on the ground of a natural impossibility of obedience.

Did the change of character, then, which the fall occasioned, preclude the possibility of subsequent obedience in Adam? What was the change? It was the utter loss of all holiness, and the prevalence of

entire depravity—every imagination of the thoughts of his heart became evil, and only evil continually. But does total depravity render spiritual obedience a natural impossibility? How? Did the perfect holiness of Adam render sinning impossible? How then did he sin? Did God help him? Did the Devil force him? But if perfect holiness does not destroy the possibility of sinning, how should perfect sinfulness destroy the possibility of obedience? Is there not as much in the 'state of man' as holy, 'including all his rational, animal, and moral powers, with the active principle which prevails in him,' to make disobedience impossible to a holy mind, as in the same state of things in an unholy mind, to render obedience impossible? But if perfect holiness does not destroy the natural possibility of sinning, how does perfect sinfulness destroy the natural possibility of obedience? And if the fall did not destroy the natural powers of agency in Adam, which rendered obedience possible, obligatory, and a reasonable service, how should it destroy in his posterity those powers and responsibilities, which it did not obliterate in himself? Has the fall overacted and come down with greater desolation on the represented, than on the federal head and representative of his race?

V. That man possesses, since the fall, the powers of agency requisite to obligation, on the ground of the possibility of obedience, is a matter of notoriety. Not one of the powers of mind which constituted ability before the fall, have been obliterated by that event. All that has ever been conceived, or that can

now be conceived, as entering into the constitution of a free agent capable of choosing life or death, or which did exist in Adam when he could and did obey, yet mutable, survive the fall. The intellect, the conscience, the susceptibilities of the soul to pleasure and pain, and the heart, including the will and affections of the soul—all these as certainly exist and as plainly exist as the five senses.

That nothing has been subtracted by the fall from the powers of agency requisite to the possibility of obedience, is strongly evident from the fact, that no one, by the most careful analysis of the mind, has ever been able to detect and name the fatal deficiency. The motive to make such an exculpatory discovery, and throw off hated obligation and feared punishment, has been as powerful as the terrors of eternity; and the effort as constant as the flow of ages—and urged with all that talent, and ingenuity, and learning could apply, and the wisdom from beneath inspire to establish the excusable impotency of man; and to this day the effort has been abortive. To appearance, the powers of the mind, and the law of God, and the glorious gospel, and the providence of God are, as they should be, to render obedience a reasonable service, and impenitence and unbelief without excuse; and where, amid the constitutional powers of agency, the defect lies, has never been discovered—what it is, has never been told—or that there is any such defect, proved.

VI. Choice, in its very nature, implies the possibility of a different or contrary election to that which is

made. There is always an alternative to that which the mind decides on, with the conscious power of choosing either. In the simplest form of alternative, it is to choose or not to choose in a given way; but in most cases, the alternatives lie between two or many objects of choice presented to the mind; and if you deny to mind this alternative power—if you insist that by a constitution anterior to choice, of the nature of a natural cause to its effect, the choice which takes place can come, and cannot but come into being, and that none other than this can by any possibility exist, you have as perfect a fatality of choice, as ever Pagan or Atheist, or Antinomian conceived. The question of free will is not whether man *chooses* —this is notorious, none deny it; but, whether his choice is free as opposed to a fatal necessity—as opposed to the laws of instinct and natural causation; whether it is the act of a mind so qualified for choice, as to decide between alternatives, uncoerced by the energy of a natural cause to its effect; whether it is the act of an agent who might have abstained from the choice he made, and made one which he did not. To speak of choice as being free, which is produced by the laws of a natural necessity, and which cannot but be *when* and *what* it is, more than the effects of natural causes can govern the time, and manner, and qualities of their being, is a perversion of language. The doctrine of the christian fathers, and of Luther and Calvin, and all the protestant confessions and standard writers, is not merely that men act by volition or choice, the choice being the effect of natural causes, as

really and entirely as the falling of rain, or the electric spark, or the involuntary shock that attends it. They meant and taught that the will is high above the coercion of natural causation, the fatality of the Stoics, Gnostics, Manicheans, or Epicureans; that it is the action of the mind of an intelligent agent, free as opposed to coercion or constraint; so that if the mental decision is right, it is properly associated with a reward, and if wrong, with punishment—an act which might, in possibility, have been refrained from, or resolved on when declined. This is what our Confession teaches and means, when it says that 'God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined, to good or evil; and that God's decrees, which extend to every event, 'offer no violence to the will of the creature, and take not away, but rather establish the liberty and contingency of second causes'—meaning by contingency, as Dr. Twiss says every university scholar knows, 'things which come to pass avoidably, and with a possibility of not coming to pass.' This is the language of our own Confession in respect to the voluntary actions of men as contingent, i. e., as avoidable and with a possibility of not coming to pass. To illustrate the fatality of an agency, in which choice is the unavoidable effect of a natural constitutional and coercive causation, let us suppose an extended manufactory, all whose wheels, like those in Ezekiel's vision, were inspired with intelligence, and instinct with life,—some crying holy! holy! as

they rolled, and others aloud blaspheming God; all voluntary in their praises and blasphemies; but the volitions, like the motions of the wheels themselves, produced by the great water-wheel and the various bands which kept the motion, and the adoration, and the blasphemy agoing: how much accountability would attach to these voluntary praises and blasphemies produced by the laws of water power; and what would it avail to say, as a reason for justifying God in punishing these blasphemies—oh! but they are free, they are voluntary, they choose to blaspheme? Truly, indeed, they blaspheme voluntarily; but their choice to do so is necessary in the same sense that the motion of the great wheel which the water, by the power of gravity turns, is necessary, and just as destitute of accountability.

In this account of free agency, the ablest writers concur. Edwards says, 'In every act of will whatever, the mind chooses one thing rather than another, the will's determining between the two is voluntary determining; and to act voluntarily, is to act electively where things are chosen.' 'There are faculties of mind,' he says, 'and capacity of nature, and every thing else sufficient but a disposition. Nothing is wanting but a will.' 'A moral agent is a being that is capable of those actions that have a moral quality, and which can properly be denominated good or evil.' Edwards the younger says, 'If by power, be meant natural power, I grant that we have such a power to choose, not only one

of several things equally eligible, if any such there be, but one of things ever so unequally eligible, and to take the least eligible.' 'Liberty or freedom must mean freedom from something, if it be a freedom from coaction or natural necessity, that is what we mean by freedom.' Buck, on the article *Necessity*, says, 'Necessity is, whatever is done by a cause or power that is irresistible, in which sense it is opposed to freedom. Man is a necessary agent, if all his actions be so determined by the causes preceding each action, that not one past action could possibly not have come to pass, or have been otherwise than it hath been, nor one future action can possibly not come to pass, or be otherwise than it shall be. On the other hand, it is asserted, that he is a free agent, if he be able at any time, under the causes and circumstances he then is, to do different things; or, in other words, if he be not unavoidably determined in every point of time by the circumstances he is in, and the causes he is under, to do any one thing he does, and not possibly to do any other thing.' And Dr. Woods says, 'The power of choosing right or wrong makes him [man] a moral agent; his actually choosing wrong, makes him a sinner.'

VII. Choice, without the possibility of other or contrary choice, is the immemorial doctrine of fatalism.

I say not that all who assert the natural inability of man are fatalists. I charge them not with holding or admitting the consequences of their theory—and I mean nothing unkind or invidious, in the proposition

I have laid down, and truth and argument are not invidious. But I say, that the theory of choice, that it is what it is by a natural, constitutional necessity, and that a man cannot help choosing what he does choose, and can by no possibility choose otherwise, *is* the doctrine of fatalism in all its forms. That there are *laws of choice*, so uniform that in the same circumstances, the action of mind can be anticipated with great certainty, is not denied. That *choice* is in accordance with the state of body and mind, and character, and external circumstances, may be admitted, or that it is as the greatest apparent good is, may be admitted; but that it is so necessarily, to the exclusion of all ability of any kind to be other than it is, cannot be admitted, without abandoning the field of God's government of accountable agents, and going to the very centre of the region of fatalism. The certainty of choice in given circumstances does not decide the manner of the certainty, as one of natural necessity, without power to the contrary. That a man always, in the same circumstances, chooses alike, is no evidence that he had no ability of any kind to choose otherwise, and chooses by a fatal necessity. Uniformity of choice, in the same circumstances, is just as consistent with free agency and natural ability, as with necessity and fatalism. But that choice, without the power of contrary choice, is fatalism in all its diversified forms, is obvious to inspection, and a matter of historical record. The fatality of the Stoics was an eternal series of cause and effect, controlling by inexorable

necessity all events, from which the will of gods and men were not exempt. The fatality of Epicurus is a material fatality; he denied the existence of spirit, and held to the universal empire of natural causes over mind in all its voluntary actions.

The Gnostic fatality made sin an eternal property of matter, and the contamination of mind the result of bodily innoculation and contact, and by an unavoidable necessity, precluding freedom of will as utterly as the communication of disease by virus.

The Manicheans held with the Gnostics to the corruption of matter, and also to sin in the essence or substance of the soul; both making sin a matter of necessity, independent of choice, and controling volition as natural causes, produce their effects.

The fatalism of Spinoza was material and pantheistic, making God the soul of the world and the only agent, and himself subject to a self-existent, eternal necessity of action, and the author alike of sin and holiness.

The fatalism of Descartes was the atomic theory, the fortuitous concourse of atoms—intelligence in results without an intelligent being—design without a designer—and choice, the product of the happy concurrence of material accidents.

The fatalism of the French revolutionary atheists, was Sadducean; that all existence is material, and all its combinations and changes the result of material laws in the form of natural cause and effect; that mind is matter, and that volition is the result of material action; and that death, the decomposition of

the body, is an eternal sleep. This is the fatalism of Robert Dale Owen and Fanny Wright.

The fatalism of Bolingbroke, and Hobbs, and Hume, was made to approximate a little more to the confines of rationality and truth, but not near enough to leave necessity behind and bring them under the government of God as free, accountable creatures. If they admitted the existence of mind and spirit distinct from matter, (of which there is some doubt,) they clothed motives, as the antecedents of volition, with the coercive power of material causes to their effects, and thus destroyed the liberty of the will, and introduced a universal coercive necessity of choice, just in all cases as it is without the possibility of one more or less, or different from those which actually come to pass.

The necessity of Priestly and Belsham was material, and all volition in accordance with the laws and action of material causes. That motives produce volition necessarily on the same principle that natural causes produce their effects; so that choice, as the spontaneous action of mind, enlightened, and guided, and influenced by law and motive, has no existence, but is in all cases the passive effect of antecedent natural causation, as incapable with accountability and desert of punishment as the sparks that rise by their less specific gravity than that of the surrounding atmosphere, or the rain drops that fall by their superior gravity to the sustaining element.

VIII. The supposition of accountability for choice, coerced by a natural necessity, is contrary to the

nature of things as God has constituted them. The relation of cause and effect pervades the universe. 'The natural world is full of it. It is the basis of all science, and of all intellectual operations with respect to mind. Can the intellect be annihilated and thinking go on? No more can the power of choice be annihilated and free agency remain. Is there not a capacity of choice with power of contrary choice in angels? and was there not in Adam before he fell? But all the powers of the mind, perception, association, abstraction, memory, taste and feeling, conscience, and capacity of choice, which were required and did exist when man was created free, are still required to constitute free agency; and can it be that when all which capacitated Adam freely to choose is demolished, that the Lord still requires of his posterity that they, without the powers of their ancestor, should exercise the perfect obedience that was demanded of him. Do the requisitions of law continue when all the necessary antecedents to obedience are destroyed? Has God required effects without a cause? If he has, then he has in the case of man, violated the analogies of the whole universe. For in the natural world there is no effect without a cause, nor is there in the intellectual world. How then can it be, that the same analogy does not hold in the moral world, where there exists such tremendous responsibilities? What! will God send men to hell, for not doing impossibilities—for not producing an effect without a cause?'

IX. 'The supposition of continued obligation and

responsibility after all the powers of causation are gone, is contrary to the common sense and intuitive perception of all mankind. On the subject of moral obligation, all men can see and do see that there can be no effect without a cause. Men are so constituted, that they cannot help seeing and feeling this. That nothing cannot produce something is an intuitive perception, and you cannot prevent it. This is the basis of that illustrious demonstration by which we prove the being of a God. For if one thing may exist without a cause, all things may; and we are yet to get hold of the first stran of an argument to prove the existence of a God. All men see that to require what there is not preparation for, is to demand an effect without a cause. What is the foundation of accountability? It is the possession of something to be accounted for. But if any man does not possess the capacity of choice with power to the contrary, he sees and feels that he is not to blame, and you cannot with more infallible certainty make men believe, and fix them in the belief, that they are not responsible, than to teach them that they have not the power of alternative election. It is the way to make a man a fatalist. But you cannot do it. God has put that in the breast of man which cannot be reasoned away. Every man knows and feels that he has power and is responsible. Men never associate blame with the qualities of will or action, on the supposition of a natural impossibility that they should be otherwise, but always on the supposition that they were able to have chosen or acted otherwise. What

would be the education of a family on this principle? There is not a child five years old, but understands this. He breaks a plate, or spoils a piece of furniture, and when he apprehends punishment, he pleads with confidence, that he did not mean to do it. His language is, 'I could'nt help it,' and on that plea he rests. The child understands it; and the parent understands it, and all human laws are built upon it. Why is not an idiot punished when he commits a crime? For the lack of that natural ability which alone makes him responsible. Why are not lunatics treated as subjects of law? Because their reason has been so injured as to destroy free agency, and with it to put an end to their accountability. Look at the government of a family. If one child is an idiot, the parent does not trust that child as he does the rest. He feels and admits, that the poor idiot is not responsible for its acts; and the same principle holds in the case of monomania, where the mind is deranged in one particular respect. I was myself acquainted with a case of this sort. I knew an individual in whom all the powers were perfect—save that the power of association was wanting; that faculty by which one thought draws on another; and she was a perfect curiosity. She would commence talking on one subject, and before the sentence was complete, she would commence on another, which had not the remotest connection with it, and in an instant pass to a third, which was foreign from both; and thus she would hop, skip, and jump over all the world—there was no concatenation of thought. Now, suppose this woman had been re-

quired to deliver a Fourth of July Oration, admitting that she possessed all the knowledge and talent in other respects, necessary to such a task; on her failing to do it, is she to be taken to the whipping post, and lacerated for that which she wanted the natural ability to do? The magistrate who would award such a sentence, would at once become infamous—and shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Will the glorious and righteous Jehovah reap where he has not sown, and gather where he has not strewed? Will he require obedience, where all power to obey is gone? Men do not require that, when even one faculty is gone; and will God, when *all* are gone, come and take his creature by the throat and say to him, pay that thou owest? That was the libel which the slothful servant brought against his Lord: 'I knew thee that thou wast a hard master, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strown, and I was afraid.' Who would not be afraid under such a ruler? Who could tell what would come next? God requires according to that which a man hath, and not according to that which he hath not. Were it otherwise, who could tell what wantonness and what oppression might not proceed from heaven's high throne?

It is a matter of universal consciousness, that men are free to choose right or wrong, life or death.

Of nothing are men more thoroughly informed, or more competent to judge unerringly, than in respect to their mode of voluntary action, as coerced or free.

No alternative, but universal scepticism.

Testimony may mislead, and the sense by disease may deceive; but consciousness is the end of all controversy; its evidence cannot be increased, and if it be distrusted, there is no alternative but universal scepticism. Our consciousness of the mode of mental action in choice, as uncoerced and free, equals our consciousness of existence itself; and the man who doubts either, gives indications of needing medical treatment instead of argument. When a man does wrong, and then reflects upon the act, he feels that he was free and is responsible; and so when he looks forward to a future action. When, for example, he deliberates whether he shall commit a theft, he listens to the pleading of cowardice or conscience on the one side, and of covetousness and laziness on the other. All these things come up and are looked at, and after considering them, he at length screws up his mind to the point and does the deed; and when he has done it, does he not know, does he not feel, that he could have chosen the other way? If not, why did he balance when he was considering? Did he not know that he had power to act, and power to leave it undone? And when it is past recal, is he not conscious that he need not have done it? And does he not say in his remorse, I am sorry that I did it? I say, therefore, it is a matter of common consciousness to all mankind, that they act uncoerced and with the power of acting otherwise. Give a child an apple and an orange; after he has eaten the orange, he will wish he had it back again, and he will say I wish I had eaten the apple and kept the orange. But why, if he did not

feel that at the time he had the power to keep the orange and eat the apple? Yes, men have the power; and the consciousness that they have it, will go with them through eternity. What says God, when he warns the sinner of the consequences of his evil choice? 'Lest thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed, and say, how have I hated instruction and my heart despised reproof, and have not obeyed the voice of my teacher, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me.' Incurable regret will arise from the perfect consciousness that when he did evil he did it freely, of choice, under no coercion; that the act was his own, and that he is justly responsible for it. This is the worm that never dies; this, this is the fire that never shall be quenched. And because this consciousness is in men, you never can reason them out of a sense of their accountability. Many have tried it, but none have effectually, or for any length of time succeeded; and the reason is plain, there is nothing which the mind is more conscious of than the fact of its own voluntary action with the power of acting right or wrong—the mind sees and knows, and regrets when it has done wrong. Take away this consciousness and there is no remorse. You cannot produce remorse, as long as a man feels that his act was not his own—that it was not voluntary but the effect of compulsion. He may dread the consequences, but you never can make him feel remorse for the act on its own account. This is the reason why men who have reasoned away the existence of God and argued

to prove that the soul is nothing but matter, know, as soon as they reflect, that all their reasoning is false. There is a lamp within, which they cannot extinguish; and after all their metaphysics, they are conscious that they act freely, and that there is a God to whom they are accountable; and hence it is that when they cross the ocean, and a storm comes on, and they expect to go to the bottom, they begin straightway to pray to God and confess their sins.'

The natural impossibility of choosing otherwise than we do choose, is contrary, then, not only to the common sense and intuitive perceptions of men, but contrary to their internal consciousness. There is a deep and universal consciousness in all men as to the freedom of choice; and in denying this, you reverse God's constitution of man. You assume that God gave a deceptive constitution to mind, or a deceptive consciousness. Now I think that God is as honest in the moral world as he is in the natural world. I believe that in our consciousness he tells the truth; and that the natural constitution, and universal feelings and perceptions of men are the voice of God speaking the truth; and if the truth is not here, where may we expect to find it?

It has been insisted by some, that in looking for the ground of accountability, men never go beyond the fact itself of voluntariness; if the deed, whether good or evil, be voluntary, that satisfies. It does; but it is because all men include, unfailingly, both in their theory and consciousness, the supposition of powers of agency unhindered and uncoerced by any fatal neces-

sity. But convince them that choice is an effect, over which mind has no more control than over the drops of rain, and the common sense of the world would revolt against the accountability of choice, merely because it was choice. There is therefore a universal practical confession of man's free agency, as including the capacity of choice, uncoerced and free. All men claim a desert of reward for welldoing, and complain of ingratitude and injustice, when it is denied. They admit and insist that those who injure them in person, good name, or substance, deserve punishment. They admit that laws, and rewards, and punishments are necessary to the government of men, and just, when administered according to their deeds. Even atheists and fatalists can rail against superstition and priestcraft, and bigotry, and persecution, as deserving execration and punishment; an evidence that when consciousness and common sense prevail, their sceptical theory is a dead letter. A nation of atheists were constrained, in words and deeds, to falsify their philosophy; and in the family and in the government, to talk and act as if men were free agents, and accountable for their deeds.

XI. All attempts to govern man and form his character, and elevate his condition, upon any other supposition than his spontaneous agency, perverts his nature and debases society. Just in proportion as mental culture is superseded by force, he sinks in the scale of being till he becomes a stupid or a ferecious animal. Treat men as if they were dogs, and soon they will act like dogs. But the moment you treat

them as free moral agents and responsible for their actions, that moment you begin to elevate them: treat a child with affection, repose confidence in him, and address his reason, he feels that he is raised, and he acts accordingly; and just as you depart from this course, you become unable to manage your child. He gets out of your hands; he gets above you; for as respects his relation to you, he is indomitable. The will of man is stronger than anything in the universe, except the Almighty God; and if you disregard this truth, you ruin your child.

XII. God requires of his subjects only conformity to himself—to his own moral excellence; but he *admits* of no obligation on himself to work impossibilities: and does he *impose* obligations on his subjects, which he himself refuses to assume? He does not regard it as an *excellence in himself* to work impossibilities: does he command it as a *virtue* in his subjects?

He has no *desire* to work impossibilities himself: why should he *desire* it in his creatures? He has never *tried*, and never will *try*, to work an impossibility: and why should he command his creatures *to do* what he himself neither desires nor tries to accomplish? He *cannot* work impossibilities: and how can it be thought that he will *require* of his creatures, *that which he himself cannot do?*

XIII. This doctrine of the natural ability of choice, commensurate with obligation, has been, and is, the received doctrine of the universal orthodox church, from the primitive age down to this day. I say not that no respectable ministers or mem-

bers of the churches have held a different doctrine; but I say that their number is so small, and the multitude so great and continuous who have taught the contrary doctrine, that it stands, unimpeached and unbroken, as the universally received doctrine of the orthodox christian church in all ages.

I begin with the doctrine of the christian fathers, as quoted by Dr. Scott, in his remarks on Tomline's Refutation of Calvinism.

It is, however, to be remembered, and noted carefully in reading this testimony of the fathers, that by '*free will*,' they mean a will free as opposed to the coercion of fate—the supposed necessity of a series of natural causes, by which the wills of God and man were controlled. The question whether the will is free in a moral sense, as biased to evil since the fall, or impartial and unbiased, had not then come up in the church. The moral bias to evil was admitted, taken for granted, and not publicly controverted till the time of Pelagius. Their doctrine of free will, therefore, is not the Pelagian or Arminian doctrine, but the anti-fatalism doctrine of mind free as uncoerced in choice, and with the power always of contrary choice; and in this view, I begin with Justin Martyr, A. D. 140.

'But lest any one should imagine, that I am asserting that things happen by a necessity of fate, because I have said that things are foreknown, I proceed to refute that opinion also. That punishments and chastisements and good rewards are given according to the worth of the action of every one, having learnt

it from the Prophets, we declare to be true: since if it were not so, but all things to happen according to FATE, nothing would be in our power; for if it were decreed by fate, that one should be good, and another bad, no praise would be due to the former, or blame to the latter. And again, if mankind had not the power, by free will, to avoid what is disgraceful and to choose what is good, they would not be responsible for their actions.' p. 13.

'Because *God from the* beginning endowed angels and men with free will, they justly receive punishment of their sins in everlasting fire. For it is the nature of every one who is born, to be capable of virtue and vice; for nothing would deserve praise, if it has not the power of turning itself away.' p. 25.

This language of Justin is as plain as it can be. That to free agency and accountability, the *natural ability of choice with power to the contrary*, is indispensable.

Tatian, A. D. 172.—'Free will destroyed us. Being free, we became *slaves;* we were *sold*, because of *sin*. No evil proceeds from God. We have produced wickedness; but those who have produced it have it in their *power again to remove it.*' p. 31. [i. e. the natural power of choosing life or death.]

Irenæus, A. D. 178.—'But man being endowed with reason, and in this respect like to God, being made free in his will, and having power over himself, is the cause that sometimes he becomes wheat and sometimes chaff. Wherefore he will also be justly condemned; because, being made rational, he lost true

reason; and living irrationally, he opposed the justice of God, delivering himself up to every earthly spirit, and serving all lusts.' p. 35.

'But if some men were bad by nature, (i. e. by a natural necessity) and others good—neither the good would deserve praise, for they were created so, nor would the bad deserve blame, being born so. But since all men are of the same nature, and *able* to lay hold of and do that which is good, and *able* to reject it again, and not do it, some justly receive praise, even from men, who act according to good laws, and some much more from God; and obtain deserved testimony of generally choosing and persevering in that which is good: but others are blamed, and receive the deserved reproach of rejecting that which is just and good. And therefore the Prophets enjoined men to do justice and perform good works.' p. 42.

Clement of Alexandria, A. D. 194.—'Neither praise nor dispraise, nor honors nor punishments, would be just, if the soul had not the power of desiring and rejecting—if vice were involuntary.' p. 54.

'As therefore he is to be commended, who uses his power in leading a virtuous life; so much more is he to be venerated and adored, who has given us this free and sovereign power, and has permitted us to live—not having allowed what we choose or what we avoid to be subject to a slavish necessity.' p. 54.

Tertullian, A. D. 200.—'I find that man was formed by God with free will and with power over himself, observing in him no image or likeness to God more than in this respect:—for he was not formed

after God, who is uniform in face, bodily lines, &c. which are so various in mankind, but in that substance which he derived from God himself: that is, the soul—answering to the form of God; and he was stamped with the freedom of his will.

'The law itself, which was then imposed by God, confirmed this condition of man. For a law would not have been imposed on a person who had not in his *power the obedience due to the law; nor, again, would transgression have been threatened with death, if the contempt also of the law were not placed to the account of man's free will.*

'He who should be found to be good or bad by necessity, and not voluntarily, could not with justice receive the retribution either of good or evil.' p. 64. This demands no comment.

Origen, A. D. 220.—'Whence, consequently, we may understand, that we are not subject to necessity, so as to be compelled by all means to do either bad or good things, although it be against our will. For if we be masters of one will, some powers, perhaps, may urge us to sin, and others assist us to safety; yet we are not compelled by necessity to act either rightly or wrongly.'

'According to us, there is nothing in any rational creature, which is not capable of good as well as evil. There is *no nature that does not admit of good and evil, except that of God, which is the foundation of all good.*' p. 66.

'We have frequently shown in all our disputations, that the nature of rational souls is such as to be capa-

ble of good *and* evil. Every one has the power of *choosing good and choosing evil.*' p. 67.

'A thing does not happen because it was foreknown; but it was foreknown, because it would happen. This distinction is necessary. For if any one so interprets what was to happen as to make what was foreknown necessary, we do not agree with him; for we do not say that it was necessary for Judas to be a traitor, although it was foreknown that Judas would be a traitor. For in the prophecies concerning Judas, there are complaints and accusations against him, publicly proclaiming the circumstance of his blame; but he would be free from blame, if he had been a traitor from necessity, and if it had been impossible for him to be like the other apostles.' pp. 80, 81.

Cyprian, A. D. 248.—'Yet did he not reprove those who left him or threaten them severely, but rather turning to the apostles said, "Will ye also go away?" preserving the law, by which man, being left to his own *liberty and endowed with free will*, seeks for himself *death* or *salvation*.' p. 84.

Lactantius, A. D. 306.—'That man has a *free will* [i. e. able to choose either way] to believe or not to believe—see in Deuteronomy, "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing, therefore choose life that both thou and thy seed may live." ' p. 88.

Eusebius, A. D. 315.—'The fault is in him who chooses, and not in God. For God has not made *nature or the substance of the soul bad;* for he who is good can make nothing but what is good. Every

thing is good which is according to nature, [i. e. as God made it.] Every rational soul has naturally a good free will formed for the choice of what is good. But when a man acts wrongly, nature is not to be blamed; for what is wrong takes place not according to nature, but contrary to nature, it being the work of choice and not of nature. For when a person who had the power of choosing what is good, did not choose it, but voluntarily turned away from what is best, pursuing what was worst; what room for escape could be left him, who is become the cause of his own internal disease, having neglected the innate law, as it were, his savior and physician.' p. 91.

In all these quotations, I repeat, the words of these fathers must be expounded with regard to the object at which their writings were directed. Let it not be forgotten, that the first heresy which vexed the church after the days of the Apostles, was the Pagan notion of fate, or such a necessary concatenation of cause and effect, as was above the will both of gods and men; the very gods themselves had no power to resist it. The same notion was involved in the heresy of the Gnostics, who held that all sin lay in matter, and that man was a sinner from necessity; and of the Manicheans, who held that all sin was in the created substance of the mind. Now in resisting these heretics, these fathers maintained with zeal the doctrine of free will: meaning thereby, not an unbiased will, but a will free from the necessity of fate; for the philosophers, and the Gnostics, and the Manichean's all held the doctrine of man's natural

inability. The philosophers derived it from fate; the Gnostics, from the corruption of matter; the Manicheans, from the constitution and nature of the soul. This was the first great attack upon the truth, on which these venerable men were called to fix their sanctified vision, and it was against these several versions of error, that they bore their testimony in favor of free will.

Cyril of Jerusalem, A. D. 348.—'The soul has free will: the devil indeed may suggest, but he has not also the power to compel contrary to the will. He suggests the thought of fornication—if you be willing, you accept it; if unwilling, you reject it: for if you committed fornication *by necessity*, why did God prepare a hell? If you acted justly by *nature*, [i. e. necessity] and not according to your own free choice, why did God prepare unutterable rewards?' p. 103.

Hilary, A. D. 304.—'The excuse of a certain natural necessity in crimes is not to be admitted. For the Serpent might have been innocent, who *himself stops his ears that they may be deaf*.' p. 110.

'There is not any necessity of sin in the nature of men, but the practice of sin arises from the desires of the will, and the pleasures of vice.'

Epiphanius, A. D. 360.—'How does he seem to retain the freedom of his will in this world? For to believe, or not to believe, is in our own power. But where it is in our power to believe or not to believe, it is in our power to act rightly or to sin, to do good or to do evil.'

Basil, A. D. 370.—'They attribute to the heavenly bodies the causes of those things that depend on every one's choice, I mean habits of virtue and of vice.'

'If the origin of virtuous or vicious actions be not in ourselves, but there is an *innate necessity*, there is no need of legislators to prescribe what we are to do and what we are to avoid; there is no need of judges to honor virtue or punish wickedness. For it is not the injustice of the thief or murderer who *could not restrain* his hand even if he would, because of the insuperable necessity that urges him to the actions.' p. 116.

Gregory of Nazianzen, A. D. 370.—'The good derived from nature has no claim to acceptance; but that which proceeds from *free wil* is deserving of praise. What merit has fire in burning? for the burning comes *by nature* [i. e. necessity.] What merit has water in descending? for this it has from the Creator. What merit has snow in being cold? or the sun in shining? for it shines whether it will or not.' p. 124.

Gregory of Nyssa.—'Let any consider how great the facility to what is bad—gliding into sin spontaneously without any effort. For that any one should become wicked, depends solely upon choice; and the will is often sufficient for the completion of wickedness.' p. 127.

Ambrose, A. D. 374.—'We are not constrained to obedience by a servile necessity, but by free will, whether we lean to virtue or to vice.'

'No one is under obligation to commit a fault unless he inclines to it from his own will.' p. 131.

Jerome, A. D. 392.—'No seed is of itself bad; for God made all things good; but bad seed has arisen from those, who by their own will are bad, which happens from will and not from nature,' [i. e. necessity.] p. 141.

'That we profess free will and can turn it either to a good or bad purpose, according to our determination, is owing to His grace, who made us after His image and likeness.'

We have now come to Augustine. And now it will be necessary to avail myself of the remarks I made on the laws of exposition. I said that it was necessary, in order to a right exposition of any ancient instrument in the church, to take into view the controversies which prevailed at the time of its composition. We must now apply this especially to Augustine. Down to his time, the free will and natural ability of man were held by the whole church, against the heretical notions of a blind fate, of material depravity, and of depravity created in the substratum of the soul. The great effort, hitherto, had been to maintain the liberty or uncoerced action of the mind in choice, with the power of contrary choice. But now Pelagius arose, and denied the doctrine of the fall; and from this spot it became necessary, not so much to prove *natural ability* which Pelagius admitted, as to prove *moral inability*, which was as much opposed to the Pelagian heresy, as natural inability was to that of the Pagan philosophers, the Gnostics, and Manicheans.

The church had now to enter upon a new controversy, and to fix her eye upon the question, what were

the consequences of the fall? The question of free agency was no longer to be argued, for that was not now controverted. Both Augustine and Pelagius admitted it. The question which now exists between Dr. Wilson and myself, was not at issue between them. The question indeed turned on the same words, viz: free will; but it did not mean the same thing. The question between them was, is the will unbiassed? Is it in equilibrio? It was not, whether it was free from the necessity of fate, or the coercion of matter, or of created depravity; but the question was, has the fall given it a bias? has it struck it out of equilibrio? and struck the balance wrong? Pelagius said, no. Augustine said, yes; and while in opposition to Pelagius, he denied *free will*, [meaning unbiassed will] he was as strong in favor of free will in the other sense, as any of the fathers before him; as strong as I am: so that if I am a Pelagian, Augustine was a Pelagian; although his whole strength was exerted against Pelagius. If what I teach is Pelagianism, then Augustine, and Calvin, and Luther, and all the best writers of the church in this age have been Pelagians, except the few who deny natural ability.

Augustine, A. D. 398.—'Free will is given to the soul, which they who endeavor to weaken by trifling reasoning, are blind to such a degree, that they do not even understand that they say those vain and sacrilegious things, with their own will.' p. 176.

'Which free will, if God had not given, there could be no just sentence of punishment, nor reward for

right conduct, nor a divine precept to repent of sins, nor pardon of sins, which God has given us through our Lord Jesus Christ; because he who does not sin with his will, does not sin at all. Which sins, as I have said, unless we had free will, would not be sins. Wherefore, if it be evident that there is no sin where there is not free will, I desire to know, what harm the soul has done, that it should be punished by God, or repent of sin, or deserve pardon, since it has been guilty of no sin.' p. 214.

'That there is free will, and that from thence every one sins if he wills, and that he does not sin, if he does not will, I prove not only in the divine scriptures, which you do not understand, but in the words of your own Manes himself: hear then concerning free will, first, the Lord himself when he speaks of two trees, which you yourself have mentioned: hear him saying, 'Either make the tree good and his fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt and his fruit corrupt.' When, therefore, he says, 'do this or do that,' he shows power, not nature. For no one, except God, can make a tree, BUT EVERY ONE HAS IT IN HIS WILL, EITHER TO CHOOSE THOSE THINGS THAT ARE GOOD AND BE A GOOD TREE; OR TO CHOOSE THOSE THINGS THAT ARE BAD AND BE A BAD TREE.' p. 215.

The next authority I shall adduce is that of Luther, who holds that, in the exercise of its own faculties, the mind chooses, by its very constitution, just as much as it thinks by the exertion of its intellect.

'There is,' he says, 'no restraint either on the divine or human will. In both cases the will does

what it does, whether good or bad, simply, and as at perfect liberty, in the exercise of its own faculty—so long as the operative grace of God is absent from us, every thing we do, has in it a mixture of evil; and therefore, of necessity, our works avail not to salvation. Here I do not mean a *necessity of compulsion*, but a necessity as to the *certainty of the event*. A man who has not the Spirit of God, does evil willingly and spontaneously. He is not violently impelled, aganist his will, as a thief is to the gallows.'—*Milner*, vol. v. cent. 16. chap. 12. sec. 2.

Thus we see that it was Luther's sentiment, that depravity does not destroy the innate liberty of the will, or its natural power; although it corrupts and perverts its exercise.

I now proceed to quote from Calvin, who holds that necessity is voluntary, that is, that the will is under no such necessity as destroys its own power of choice; that there was no other yoke upon man but voluntary servitude; and that the doctrine for which I contend is not new divinity, but old Calvinism.

Calvin says—'That God is voluntary in his goodness, Satan in his wickedness, and man in his sin.' 'We must therefore observe,' he says, 'that man, having been corrupted by the fall, sins voluntarily, not with reluctance or constraint; with the strongest propensity of disposition, not with violent coercion; with the bias of his own passions, and not with external compulsion.' He quotes Bernard, as agreeing with Augustine, in saying, 'Among all the animals,

man alone is free; and yet by the intervention of sin, he suffers a species of violence, but from the will, not from nature; so that he is not thereby deprived of *his innate liberty*.' Both Augustine and the Reformers speak, indeed, of the bondage of the will, and of the necessity of sinning, and of the impossibility that a natural man should turn and save himself without grace; but they explain themselves, to mean that *certainty of continuance in sin*, which arises from a perverted free agency, and not from any natural impossibility. For 'this necessity,' they say expressly, 'is voluntary.' 'We are oppressed with a yoke, but no other than that of voluntary servitude: therefore our servitude renders us miserable, and our will renders us inexcusable.' See *Calvin's Instit.* Book ii. ch. 3. sec. 5.

'I always exclude coercion, for we sin voluntarily, or it would not be sin unless it were voluntary.' *Commentary on Rom.* vii.

My next quotation is from Turretin, the apostle of orthodoxy, whose works are the text book in the Princeton Seminary.

'The question is not concerning the power or natural faculty of will, "a qua est ipsum velle vel nolle," which may be called, first power and the material principle of moral action; for this always remains in man, and by it he is distinguished from the brutes.'

'Velle vel nolle' means in the technics of the day, the power to choose or not to choose in every case; and this he says always remains in man in every condition, as by it he is distinguished from the brutes.

'The natural power of willing in whatever condi-

tion we may be, is never taken away from us, insomuch as by it we are distinguished from the brutes.' p. 999.

Howe is my next witness. He was cotemporary with the Assembly of Divines at Westminster. He quotes the following with approbation from Twiss.

'The inability to do what is pleasing and acceptable to God, is not a natural, but moral inability; for no faculty of our nature is taken away from us by original sin: as saith Augustine—It has taken from no man the faculty of discerning truth. The power still remains, by which we can do whatever we choose. We say that the natural power of doing anything according to our will is preserved to all, but no moral power.'

Dr. Witherspoon:—'The sinner will perhaps say, But why should the sentence be so severe? The law may be right in itself, but it is hard, or even impossible for me. I have no strength. I cannot love the Lord with all my heart. I am altogether insufficient for that which is good. Oh, that you would but consider what sort of inability you were under to keep the commandments of God. Is it natural, or is it moral? Is it really want of ability, or is it only want of will? Is it anything more than the depravity and corruption of your hearts, which is itself criminal, and the source of all actual transgressions? Have you not natural faculties and understanding, will and affections, a wonderful frame of body and a variety of members? What is it that hinders them all from being consecrated to God? Are they not as proper

in every respect for his service, as for a baser purpose? When you are commanded to love God with all your heart, this surely is not commanding more than you can pay. For if you give it not to him, you will give it to something else that is far from being so deserving of it. The law, then, is not impossible, in the strict and proper sense, even to you.'

'He (the convinced sinner,) *will see that there is nothing to hinder his compliance with every part of his duty, but an inward aversion to God, which is the very essence of sin.*'

'Without perplexing ourselves with the meaning of the imputation of Adam's first sin, this we may be sensible of, that the guilt of all inheritant corruption must *be personal, because it is voluntary and consented to.* Of both these things a discovery of the glory of God will powerfully convince the sinner.'

Dr. Watts:—'Man has lost, not his natural power to obey the law; he is bound, then, as far as natural powers will reach. I own his faculties are greatly corrupted by vicious inclinations, or sinful propensities, which has been happily called by our divines a moral inability to fulfil the law, rather than a natural impossibility of it.'

Dr. Samuel Spring of Newburyport.—'What is moral action? A moral action is an exercise of the will or heart of man. A moral action is the volition of a moral agent. Nothing is moral which is not voluntary. It is as absurd to talk of sin separate from moral exercise or volition, as it is to talk of whiteness separate from anything which is white.'

Dr. Spring of New York.—'Seriously considered, it is impossible to sin without acting voluntarily. The divine law requires nothing but voluntary obedience, and forbids nothing but voluntary disobedience. As men cannot sin without acting, nor act without choosing to act, so they must act voluntarily in sinning.'—*Spring's Essays*, p. 120.

This nature of sin, as actual and voluntary, he carries out in its application to infants. He says:

'Every child of Adam is a sinner [an actual sinner] from the moment he becomes a child of Adam. He sins not in deed nor word, but in thought. The thought of foolishness is sin. * * * Who ever heard or conceived of a living immortal soul without natural faculties and moral dispositions? Every infant that has attained maturity enough to have a soul, has such a soul as this. It is a soul which perceives, reasons, remembers, feels, chooses, and has the faculty of judging of its own moral dispositions.'—*Spring on Native Depravity*, pp. 10, 14.

Henry on Ezekiel xviii. 31. 'The reason why sinners die, is because they will die. They will go down the way that leads to death, and not come up to the terms on which life is offered. Herein sinners are most unreasonable and act most unaccountably.'

Dr. Wilson of Philadelphia. 'No mere man is able, either of himself, or by any grace received in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God,' &c. The *ability* which is here denied is evidently of the *moral* kind, because the aid of the inability is supposed to be *grace*, which adds no *new* faculties.

The passage taken from the Confession of Faith, chap. xvi. is a representation of the same thing. 'This ability to do good works is not at all of themselves, but wholly from the Spirit of God.' Here the ability spoken of, is that which the saint has, and the sinner has not; and is derived from the Spirit of God; it is therefore merely the effect of regenerating grace, which changes the *heart*, removes the *prejudices*, and thus enlightens the *understanding;* the law itself ought to convince such minds of their inability to render an acceptable righteousness, and thus lead them to Christ. In all these instances, the inability consists not in the *natural*, that is physical defects, either of mind or body; if it were such, it would excuse; but it consists in the party's *aversion to holiness*. This is also clear from another passage cited in the essay, page 15, from the Confession of Faith—'A natural man being altogether averse from that which is good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereto.' Here the words '*dead in sin*,' express a higher degree of that '*aversion to good*,' which had been predicted of man in his natural and unrenewed state, and suppose the party to have no more disposition to things spiritual and holy than a dead carcass possesses towards objects of sense. The inability or want of strength here mentioned, is affirmed of the natural man; and his inability, or that circumstance in which it consists, is pointed out expressly by the intercalary member, 'being altogether averse from that which is good, and dead in

sin.' Language can scarcely be found more clearly to show, that the only culpable *inability* or *want of strength* in the sinner, lies in his *aversion to that which is good.*' pp. 14, 15.

Dr. Dickinson, a cotemporary of Dr. Witherspoon in New Jersey, and a cotemporary also with Dr. Green in the early part of his life, has this sentiment on the point of discussion: 'Let inability be properly denominated and called obstinacy.' This was a divine of admitted and unimpeachable orthodoxy, a man of eminent abilities, a friend to revivals of religion, and one of the pillars of the Presbyterian church.

President Davis, the pioneer and planter of Presbyterianism in Virginia, afterward president of Princeton college, one of the most pungent, popular, and successful of preachers, inquires, 'What is inability but unwillingness?'

Edwards, the younger, president of Union college, was a Presbyterian, and what does he say? To the question, whether the moral inability which his father taught, can be removed by the sinner, his answer was: 'Yes: and the moment you deny this, you change the whole character of the inability together with the whole character of the man; for then his inability ceases to be obstinacy, and becomes physical incapacity.'

Witsius.—'He [Adam] sinned with judgment and will, to which faculties, liberty, as opposed to compulsion, is so peculiar, nay essential, that there can be neither judgment nor will, unless they be free.' Vol. i. p. 198.

The Andover Declaration, subscribed by the professors.—'God's decrees perfectly consist with human liberty, God's universal agency with the agency of man, and man's dependence with his accountability. Man has understanding and corporeal strength to do all that God requires of him; so that nothing but the sinner's aversion to holiness prevents his salvation.' Laws, p. 9.

Dr. Tyler: see National Preacher, vol. ii. pp. 161, 163.—'Several *doctrines of the gospel*, have been regarded by some as presenting insuperable obstacles to their salvation.'

'The doctrine of *Human Depravity*, has been thus regarded. If I am *entirely depraved*, the sinner sometimes says, then I am utterly helpless. It is beyond my power to do anything which God requires; and, consequently, it is totally impossible that I should comply with the terms of salvation revealed in the gospel. This representation proceeds upon an entire misapprehension as to the nature of depravity. Depravity does not destroy moral agency. It does not so impair the natural faculties of man, as to disable him from doing his duty, if he will. It has its seat in the heart, and consists in a perverse and sinful inclination. When we say, that man is entirely depraved, we do not mean that he is a poor, unfortunate being, who is commanded to do impossibilities; but we mean that he is a guilty rebel, who voluntarily refuses to yield allegiance to the God who made him. We mean, that he loves sin, and is unwilling to abandon it; that he hates his duty, and is unwilling

to perform it; that he dislikes the terms of salvation, and is unwilling to comply with them. We do not mean, that all the powers and faculties of his soul are so impaired, that he *could not* do his duty if he *would;* but we mean that he *will not* do his duty when he *can —that in the full possession of all the powers of moral agency, and with perfect ability to comply with the terms of salvation, if he will, he chooses the road that leads to death, and will not come to Christ that he might have life.* This supposes no difficulty in the way of his salvation, except what lies in a perverse and obstinate will.

'Again: the doctrine of *Regeneration*, is supposed to imply an insuperable obstacle in the way of the sinner's salvation. We often hear the sinner reasoning thus—"If I must be born again, in order to enter into the kingdom of God; and if this change is exclusively the work of the Holy Spirit; a work which he is under no obligations to perform, and which my own efforts will never accomplish; then, there is a difficulty in the way of my salvation, which is beyond my power to remove. It does not depend on my will, but on the will of God, whether I shall be saved." But here again the sinner labors under an entire misapprehension, as to the nature of the change in question, and as to the reason why this change is necessary. What is it to be born again? Simply, to be *made willing* to do what God requires. It is thus represented in the scriptures, *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.* Why is it necessary, that men should be born again? Not because they

are *unable* to do their duty, if they will; but because they are *unwilling* to do it. It is their *depravity* which renders this supernatural change necessary. But their depravity is not their calamity merely, but their *crime*. It consists, as we have seen, in a perverse inclination; in a voluntary and obstinate refusal to yield obedience to the reasonable commands of Jehovah. What the sinner needs, therefore, is to have this perverse inclination changed; that is, to be made *willing* to do what God requires. The necessity of this change, therefore, supposes no obstacle in the way of his salvation, except *his own unwillingness* to do his duty.'

Dr. Woods: Letters to Dr. Ware, ch. v. p. 183.—'According to our views, there can be no such necessity in the case, as implies force or coercion, or anything contrary to perfect voluntariness.

'What, then, is the freedom which belongs to a moral agent? It is freedom from that physical coercion or force, which either causes actions that are not voluntary; or prevents those which the agent chooses to perform.

'I grant that man has a power of choosing between different courses, and of yielding to either of two opposite motives.' *Remarks on Ware*, pp. 34, 35, 36.

'Men have by nature the constitution—they have all the faculties, essential to moral agency.'

Third Letter to Dr. Beecher; Spirit of the Pilgrims, vol. vi. No. 1, pp. 19—22.—'I have just received your sermon on Dependence and Free Agency; and,

according to a suggestion in your last letter to me, I shall proceed to remark on some of the topics which it introduces.

'Between your views and mine on the subject of man's *ability* and *inability*, there is not, so far as I can judge, any real disagreement. You do indeed sometimes use language different from that which I am accustomed to use. But when you come to explain your language, as you do in your second letter, and in your sermon just published, you show that you have a meaning which I can fully adopt. In the first place you do, what many who make much of man's ability neglect to do; that is, you clearly make the distinction between *natural* ability and inability, and *moral*. *Natural* ability you explain to be, "the intellectual and moral faculties which God has given to men, commensurate with his requirements;"—"the plenary powers of a free agent;"—"such a capacity for obedience as creates perfect obligation to obey." You say, it is "what the law means, when it commands us to love God with all our *heart*, and *soul*, and *mind*, and *strength*." The sinner, according to your representation, is under no *natural impossibility* to obey God; that is, it is not impossible for him to obey God in the same sense in which it is impossible for him "to create a world." To all this I fully subscribe. Here then is no room for debate. I have been acquainted with ministers who have differed widely in their language respecting human ability, and who have had much debate on the subject, and have seemed to entertain opposite opinions. But I

doubt not, they would all coincide with the above statements. They would all admit that man has those intellectual and moral faculties which constitute him a moral agent, justly accountable for his actions, and under perfect obligation to obey the divine law. But all would not judge it best to give to these faculties the name of *ability*, or even of *natural ability*. In regard to the words by which the sentiment, held by them all, may most properly be expressed, there would be a difference. And would not this be the only difference? And would not any dispute on the subject be *logomachy?* Suppose a minister of Christ does not like the expression, that sinners have a *natural ability* to obey the divine law. But he admits that they have those faculties of mind which constitute them moral and accountable beings, put them under a perfect obligation to obey, and bring on them a just condemnation for disobedience. That is, he admits all that you mean by *natural ability*, though he does not use the language. Respecting this, you and he may differ. But the moment you lay aside the word, *ability*, and use other words expressing exactly what you mean by this, the difference between you and him is ended. You both believe that sinners have all the powers necessary to moral agents, and that they are under perfect obligation to do what God commands; though you may perhaps attach more importance to this view of the subject, and may give it more importance in your preaching, than he thinks proper.

'The same as to *inability*. I find from your expla-

nations, that you believe the sinner to be the subject of all the *inability* which I have ever attributed to him. You say that man, in his unrenewed state, is "destitute of holiness and prone to evil;" that he has "an *inflexible* bias of will to evil;" "a sinfulness of heart and obliquity of will, which overrule and pervert his free agency only to purposes of evil;" that he has "an *obstinate* will, which as really and certainly demands the interposition of special divine influence, as if his inability were natural;" that "HIS NATURAL ABILITY NEVER AVAILS, EITHER ALONE, OR BY ANY POWER OF TRUTH, OR HELP OF MAN, TO RECOVER HIM FROM ALIENATION TO OBEDIENCE;" that "the special renovating influence of the Spirit is *indispensable* to his salvation;" "that motives and obligation are by his obstinacy swept away;" and "that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to *convince him* of *sin*, to *enlighten his mind*, to *renew* his *will*, and to *persuade* and *enable* him to embrace Christ;" that "the powers requisite to free agency, which still remain in degenerate man, are wholly perverted, and *hopeless of recovery*, without the grace of God;" "that men, as sinners, are dependant on Christ for a willingness to do any thing which will save their souls." You hold it to be "a fact, that mind, once ruined, never recovers itself;" that the disease rages on, unreclaimed by its own miseries, and only exasperated by rejected remedies;" that "the main-spring of the soul for holy action, is gone, and that divine influence is the only substitute."

'You not only make these just and moving repre-

sentations of the state of unregenerate man, but you expressly speak of him as having an *inability* to obey God. You make the "distinction between the *ability* of man *as a free agent*, and his *inability as a sinner*," and say, "it is a distinction singularly plain, obvious to popular apprehension, and sanctioned by the common sense of all men." You fully justify the language of the Bible in ascribing to man, "inability to obey the gospel." You quote the passages which declare, that "the carnal mind *cannot* be subject to the law of God;—that they who are in the flesh *cannot* please God;" and you say the inability spoken of means the *impossibility* of becoming holy by any philosophical culture of the natural powers, *or by any possible modification* of our depraved nature;" though you very properly take care to guard us against supposing, that the *inability* of sinners implies "an absolute natural impossibility," or has "a *passive, material* import." You say, also, that "no language is *more frequent* in the common intercourse of men, than the terms, *unable*, *cannot*, and the like, to express slight, or determined and unchanging aversion; and that the same use of these terms pervades the Bible;" that "inability, meaning only voluntary aversion, or permanent choice or disinclination, is ascribed to God, to Christ, and to good men in as strong terms, as inability to obey the gospel is ascribed to sinners."

'In regard to the above cited representations of yours, I see no ground for controversy. I am aware that, in your preaching, you are accustomed to say less frequently than many others, that sinners *cannot*

believe and obey. But even if you should think it best, as some do, to go farther, and wholly to avoid expressions of that kind; still while, in other words, you attribute to the sinner every thing which I and others mean by such expressions, there would be no difference except in *words*. In the unmeasured abundance of remarks which have lately been made on the subject of ability and inability, it has not been always remembered that the principal, if not the only difference, which exists among thinking and candid men, is *verbal*. IF THIS SHOULD BE KEPT IN MIND, AS IT OUGHT TO BE, AND IF MEN WHO ARE GOING TO DISPUTE, WOULD JUST STOP TO INQUIRE WHAT THEY ARE GOING TO DISPUTE ABOUT, IT WOULD VERY MUCH NARROW THE GROUND OF DEBATE, AND DIMINISH, IF NOT REMOVE, THE OCCASIONS OF STRIFE.

'Still I hold the question about *the use of particular words* to be of no small importance. Words are the usual means of conveying the thoughts of our own minds to the minds of others. If then our words are not well chosen, we may fail of communicating what we wish, and may communicate something very different; and so the gift of speech, instead of contributing to useful purposes, may become positively hurtful.

'It is not my design to controvert any of the positions which you lay down on the subject of *ability* and *inabilty*. Putting a candid and fair construction on your language, and considering you as agreeing with those excellent authors to whom you refer with approbation, I am satisfied, as I have before said,

that there is no material difference between your opinions and mine on this subject. My remarks therefore will relate chiefly, if not wholly, to *modes of expression;* though not so much to any which you employ, as to those employed by others. There is danger, I think, of a wrong impression being made on the minds of men from the manner in which some preachers speak respecting the sinner's ability. And although there is much in what you have lately given to the public, which is well calculated to guard against this danger, I humbly conceive that still greater caution in your manner of treating the subject, would do no hurt.'

Dr. Bellamy.—'The law is exactly upon a level with our *natural capacities;* it only requires us to love God with *all* our hearts. Hence, as to *natural capacity*, all mankind are *capable* of a perfect conformity to this law; for the law requires of no man any more than to love God with *all his heart.* The sinning angels have the same *natural capacities* now, as they had before they fell; they have the same *faculties*, called the *understanding* and *will;* they are still the same beings as to their *natural powers.* Their *temper*, indeed, is different; but their *capacity* is the same; therefore, as to *natural capacity*, they are as *capable* of a perfect conformity to the law of their Creator as ever they were. So Adam, after his fall, had the same soul that he had before, as to his *natural capacities*, though of a very different *temper;* and therefore, in that respect, was as *capable* of a perfect conformity to the law as ever. And it is plainly the case, that

all mankind, as to their *natural capacities*, are *capable* of a perfect conformity to the law, from this, that when sinners are converted, they have no new *natural faculties* though they have a *new temper;* and when they come to love God with all their hearts in heaven, still they will have the *same hearts*, as to their *natural faculties*, and may, in this respect, be justly looked upon as the very same beings. When, therefore, men cry out against the holy law of God, which requires us only to love him with *all our hearts*, and say, "It is not just in God to *require* more than we *can* do, and then threaten to damn us for not doing," they ought to stay awhile, and consider what they say, and tell what they mean by their CAN DO; for it is plain, that the law is exactly upon a level with our *natural capacities*, and that, in this respect, we are *fully capable* of a perfect conformity thereto. And it will be impossible for us to excuse ourselves by an *inability* arising from *any other* quarter." "And finally, this want of a good temper, THIS VOLUNTARY AND STUBBORN AVERSION TO GOD, AND LOVE TO THEMSELVES, THE WORLD, AND SIN, IS ALL THAT RENDERS THE IMMEDIATE INFLUENCES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT SO ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY, OR INDEED AT ALL NEEDFUL, TO RECOVER AND BRING THEM TO LOVE GOD WITH ALL THEIR HEARTS." '—*True Religion Delineated*, Disc. I. Sec. 3.

Dr. Samuel Hopkins.—'It has been thought and urged by many, that fallen man cannot be wholly blameable for his moral depravity, because he has *lost his power* to do that which is good, and is wholly *unable* to change and renew his depraved heart. But

what has been before observed must be here kept in mind, that man has not lost any of his natural powers of understanding and will, &c., by becoming sinful. He has lost his inclination, or is wholly without any inclination to serve and obey his Maker, and entirely opposed to it. In this his sinfulness consists; and in this lies his blame and guilt, and in nothing else; and the stronger and more fixed the opposition to the law of God is, and the farther he is from any inclination to obey, the more blameable and inexcusable he is. Nothing but the opposition of the heart, or will of man, to coming to Christ, is or can be in the way of his coming. So long as this continues, and his heart is wholly opposed to Christ, he cannot come to him, it is impossible, and will continue so, until his unwillingness, his opposition to coming to Christ, be removed by a change and renovation of his heart by divine grace, and be made *willing* in the day of God's power.' 'Nothing is necessary but the renovation of the *will*, in order to set every thing right in the human soul.'—*System of Divinity*, Part I. Ch. 8, and Part II. Ch. 4.

Dr. Smalley.—'The whole Bible evidently goes upon the supposition that man is a free agent; and so do all mankind in their treatment of one another.' 'It is certain that no natural men, except idiots, or such as are quite delirious, are totally incapable of good works for want of understanding.' 'The power of will is not the deficiency in natural men.' 'Were men destitute of understanding to know what is right; or destitute of power to choose according to their

own disposition; or destitute of members to act, according to their own choice; they would so far not be proper subjects of commands, and no blame would lie upon them for not obeying. But no such powers of moral agency are the things wanting in natural men. They have hands and heads sufficiently good; and a sufficient power to will whatever is agreeable to them. All they want is a good heart. Their inability is therefore their sin, and not their excuse.'—*Sermons* 10, 16.

Dr. Stephen West.—'It therefore appeareth, that all those voluntary exercises and affections which are required of us in the divine law, may be said to be *in our power*. There is no opposition to any obedience which is claimed by the divine law, except it be in our wills.'—*On Moral Agency*, Part I. Sec. 2.

Dr. Nathan Strong.—'Here the proud heart objects. Can this be cause of rejoicing, that I am in the hand of a most absolute sovereign? Is this consistent with my dignity as a rational creature and a free agent? Truly it is. If thy reason be exercised right, all its dictates will be in conformity to the sovereign counsel and acting of God. If thy heart be opposed to infinite reason, or prejudices thy reason, it is the depravity of thy heart, and not the sovereignty of God, which degrades, and takes dignity away from thee. Neither is thy dignity as a free agent lessened. Art thou not as free in sinning, as the holy angels and holy men are in loving and obeying God? Is not sin thy choice? Dost thou not sin because thou lovest sin? The sovereignty of God will never destroy thy

freedom as a rational agent, but an evil use of this freedom hath made thee base, and without repentance, will be the means of thy misery forever.'—*Sermons*, vol. I. Ser. 4.

Dr. Dwight.—'The nature of this inability to obey the law of God is, in my own view, completely indicated by the word *indisposition*, or the word *disinclination*.' 'The real and only reason why we do not perform this obedience [perfect obedience to the law of God] is, that we do not possess such a disposition as that of angels. Our natural powers are plainly sufficient: our inclination only defective.' 'There is no more difficulty in obeying God, than in doing any thing else, to which our inclination is opposed with equal strength and obstinacy.' 'Indisposition to come to Christ, is the true and the only difficulty which lies in our way. Those who *cannot* come, therefore, are those, and those only, who *will* not. The words *can* and *cannot*, are used in the Scriptures, just as they are used in the common intercourse of mankind, to express *willingness* or *unwillingness*.' 'From these observations it is evident, that the disobedience of mankind is their own fault.' And 'the degree of our inability to obey the divine law, does in no case lessen our guilt.' And 'these observations teach us the propriety of urging sinners to immediate repentance.' —*Theology*, Sermon 133.

The Assembly's narrative for 1819, declares that the destruction of the finally impenitent is charged 'wholly upon their own unwillingness to accept of the merciful provision made in the gospel.'

Freedom of the will—Dr. John Matthews.

Rev. John Matthews, D. D., Theological Professor of South Hanover Seminary, commended by Dr. Wilson as correct.—'Our case though in some respects it bears a striking resemblance to those who sleep in the grave, yet in others is widely different. They make no opposition to the active pursuits of life. Nor does any blame attach to them on account of their insensibility. Not so, however, with us. We have eyes, but we see not; ears, but we hear not; we have indeed all the intellectual faculties and moral powers which belong to rational beings, but they are *devoted* to the world; they are *employed* against God and his government. Instead of love, the heart is influenced by enmity against God. Instead of repentance, there is hardness of heart. Instead of faith, by which the Savior is *received*, there is unbelief by which with all his blessings he is *rejected*. We possess, indeed, all the natural faculties which God demands in his service; but we are without the moral power. We have not the disposition, the desire, to employ them in his service. This want of disposition, instead of furnishing the shadow of excuse for our unbelief and impenitence, is the very essence of sin, the demonstration of our guilt. Here, then, is work for Omnipotence itself. Here is not only insensibility to be quickened, but here is opposition, here is enmity to be destroyed. The art and maxims of men may change, in some degree, the outward appearances, but they never can reach the seat of the disease. There it will remain, and there it will operate, after all that created wisdom and power can do. That

power which can start the pulse of spiritual life within us, must reach and control the very origin of thought, must change our very motives. Our case would be hopeless, if our restoration depended on the skill and efforts of created agents.'

I now beg leave to adduce the testimony of Dr. Wilson himself. This passage from Dr. Matthews goes the whole length of all that I hold in respect to natural ability. If this is not heresy, it is all I mean, and all I teach, or ever did teach. If Dr. Wilson is not opposed to this, then he has misunderstood me, and he and I think alike. If he agrees to this, then he and I do agree; for I challenge man or angel to find anything like a discrepancy, and I challenge him to find any. That he does agree to this is manifest, and two things which are equal to the same, are equal to each other. In the notes he says:

'Thus it is evident, that without conference or correspondence, or even personal acquaintance, there are ministers in the Presbyterian church, who can and do speak the same things, who can and do speak the language of the true reformers in all ages. May the Lord increase their number and bind up the breach of his people.'

My argument is this:—The fact that these writers held the opinions which they have here declared, I do not bring as proof absolute that the Confession of Faith teaches as they held; but that it is altogether probable the framers of that instrument belonging to this class of men, and standing in the same rank with them, did not teach doctrines in direct contradiction

to this. I have brought down these testimonies to the present time, because these expositions throw light upon the pages of the Confession, by showing the impression which it made on these writers, and the sense in which they received it. It would be one of the strongest anomalies in the whole history of the human mind, that men who knew all about the controversy of Augustine and Pelagius, as well as the controversy which preceded, should, when they sat down to make a Confession of Faith, go directly against the whole stream of the Faith of the church.

Such is the testimony of the Christian fathers, and the received doctrine of the orthodox church, from the beginning to this day. I now add:

XIV. That the Bible teaches the free agency and natural ability of man to obey or disobey, uncoerced by any natural necessity or hindrance, as his qualification for moral government, and the foundation of his obligation and accountability.

1. That the Bible has been understood to teach this by the universal orthodox church, is a strong presumptive argument that the Bible does teach it.

It was made to be understood by fallen man, and by common uneducated minds, in respect to its most vital doctrines; and there is no doctrine more immediately fundamental, than that of free agency as the ground of obligation and accountability. Now, the impression which the Bible makes on common minds, who, unsophisticated by theory, read and receive its impression, is, that there remains to man, in the estimation of heaven, the capacity of choosing whom he

will serve, God or the world, and of choosing life or death; and that his obligation to choose good and refuse the evil, originates in their constitutional power of choice, with power of contrary choice. This is the popular feeling and belief of those who read the Bible.

But if the uninstructed may be supposed to mistake, it was certainly intended to be intelligible to the most talented, learned, and holy men, who make the study and translation and exposition of it their profession and habitual employment.

But unanswerably the Bible has been understood to teach the doctrine of man's free agency and natural ability, in the manner I have above explained, by the ablest, holiest, and most learned men. These, interpreting the Bible in accordance with the laws of language and the best operations of sanctified intellect, have understood it to teach the natural ability of man, as the foundation of obligation, and the moral inability of man as consisting in a perverse will. If this decision of so many men of talented mind, and learning, and labor, is false, all attempts to expound the Bible are vain—the Bible is yet a sealed book—and all the promises of wisdom to those who ask, and of guidance in judgment to the meek, have, unanswered, been scattered to the wind.

2. The implications of the Bible teach the free agency of man as including a natural ability to obey, as the qualification for moral government, and the foundation of accountability.

The directory precepts, the commands and prohi-

bitions, the rewards and punishments, the exhortations, warnings, entreaties, and expostulations of the Bible teach this—the oath of God's preference that fallen man should obey rather than disobey; and the regrets and the wonder of heaven at his obstinacy and unbelief, teach the same; and the punishment, executed not only for what he did do that was wrong, but because in place of this, he did not do what was right, because he did not *turn*, did not repent, did not believe, all imply ability. That such implications are multiplied throughout the Bible, will not be denied: that they do strongly imply capacity of right or of wrong choice, and are based on that supposition, is equally plain. But what would be thought of a human government that should address such language to stocks and stones, or to animals, or to machines moved by steam or water power? And why should they be addressed to man, if he has no more power to obey than these?

If obedience to commands, exhortations, and entreaties, is prevented by a constitutional *necessity*, a natural impossibility of choosing right; and the disobedient choice is also the unavoidable, coerced result of a constitutional necessity, over which the will has no power, but of which, it is the unavoidable effect: then choice is as much the effect of a natural *cause*, as any other natural effect; and directory precepts, and rewards and penalties, and exhortations and entreaties are as irrelevant and superfluous, as if they were addressed to our appetites, or applied to secure

the beating of the heart, or the circulation of the blood.

If a created constitution secures the volition, whatever it may be, what need of another apparatus to produce it? Is not one cause sufficient; and if it were not, why add an apparatus which is totally irrelevant and powerless? The adoption of *law* and motive, then, as the means of moral government, implies irresistibly that God's unerring wisdom has not entrusted the will of men, like instinctive actions, to the guardianship of *natural causes*, and has committed it to the guidance and guardianship of law, and reward and punishment, with such capacity that choice in accordance with requirement is possible, and reasonable; and contrary choice, possible also, and inexcusable, and justly punishable. On this argument, we observe:

That these implications of the Bible do clearly and in the strongest possible manner, treat the doctrine of man's free agency and natural ability to obey or disobey the gospel, as the foundation of his obligation. Implication is the most uniform and established mode of scriptural teaching in respect to natural, mental, and moral philosophy. It teaches almost nothing by formal definitions, and regular propositions, and proofs; but assumes and takes for granted whatever truths of this kind it has occasion to recognize. But the assumptions of an inspired unerring book, the assumptions of Him who created and organized the world, and forms and governs the mind, are the most powerful, unequivocal, infallible mode of teaching.

All the assumptions of the Bible, marked with uniform exactness.

In demonstration, men may err, and come out with false conclusions; but God, in his assumptions, cannot err. The Bible, therefore, teaches in the most direct, and forcible manner, the free agency and natural ability of men as qualified subjects of moral government. The supposition that these assumptions of the Bible are not true, and that man, after all, is not able to modify and diversify his choice indefinitely, but chooses sin or holiness by a coercive necessity —that he cannot but sin when he does sin, more than rivers of muddy water can purify themselves, and stop flowing—and cannot turn and prefer the Creator to the creature, more than the prone waters can roll back their tide to their fountains; destroys the credibility of the Bible as an inspired book.

Hitherto, all the assumptions of the Bible have been marked with a uniform and wonderful exactness.

Its astronomical, geographical, historical, chronological, and all other implications are always verified in the results of the strictest examination.

And it is necessary to the credibility of the Bible that it should be so. If it spoke of the visible heavens different from their appearance to the eye—and if its geography, and chronology, and natural history, were at every step falsified by scientific investigations—if the lion and the ostrich and the war-horse of the Bible were verified by no correspondences in nature, and all its assumptions of countries, and scenery, and natural productions, were contradicted by the condition of the countries alluded to, it would disprove

Philosophy corroborates the verity of the Bible in all its assumptions.

the credibility of the Bible as an inspired book. Infidels aware of this fact, have made ceaseless efforts to catch the Bible tripping some where in the field of natural science, and have exulted exceedingly when they supposed they had detected a few mistakes of this description. But no sooner did the lamp of true philosophy follow the footsteps of their presumptuous ignorance, than it dissipated their premature rejoicing, by discovering the exact verity of the Bible in all its assumptions of the attributes and laws of nature.

But what would be said, if in tracing the implications of the Bible, in respect to the qualifications of mind, for accountable agency and government by law, we should find them all contradicted? While natural philosophy verified, mental and moral philosophy contradicted, the fundamental principles it takes for granted. The Bible assuming every where that man is free to choose with power of contrary choice; when, in fact, as the truth is developed, it appears that he is no more able, as a free agent to choose at all, than a spark is to strike itself out without the collision of flint and steel, and no more able to choose otherwise than he does choose, than water is to be fire, and fire water.

Christianity could not stand before such contradictions of revelation by science. It would open upon us the floodgates of an all-pervading, irresistible infidelity. Nay, it would not stop at infidelity—it would undermine all confidence in consciousness or argument, and terminate in universal scepticism.

The Bible in no way contradicts its own implications.

Our argument against transubstantiation is, that our senses are a correct revelation of the reality and attributes of external things; that no written revelation from heaven can contradict the testimony of this constitutional revelation by the senses concerning attributes of external objects, without supposing the conflict of contrary revelations, which would not only destroy the credibility of the Bible, but vacate all confidence in the testimony of the senses.

These implications are corroborated by the analogy of cause and effect through all the works of God—by the common sense and universal consciousness of men—by all the results of mental analysis, uniting philosophers in the definition of free agency—and by the concession of individuals and the public sentiment of the world, as disclosed in moral government as the means of elevating society. But if these implications of the Bible of a free agency and natural ability to obey commensurate with law thus corroborated, are not true, it brings on the Bible overwhelming evidence of incorrect teaching; and if on this tremendous subject all its implications are false, the Bible fails to sustain its claims, and the whole system of revelation and its doctrines goes out in darkness.

3. The Bible does in no way contradict its own implications, by teaching the natural ability of man to render to God a holy and spiritual obedience.

It applies to fallen man in respect to spiritual obedience the terms, 'cannot, unable,' &c. This is not

The term inability, used in two senses.

denied—it is admitted—it is insisted on. But the question is, what does the term inability mean, when applied to a free agent and a totally depraved sinner—are the terms, 'cannot, unable,' &c. used in common language of men and in the Bible only in one sense, and that the sense of a natural impossibility? If so, the question is settled, and we are at fault? But if there are two senses in which these terms are used in common and in scriptural language, one of which means a natural impossibility, and the other respects an event possible, in respect to the capacity of the agent, but prevented by a perverse choice; then to deny this distinction, and condense both, by an arbitrary assertion, into a natural impossibility, is to beg the question in dispute—to do violence to the laws of exposition, and substitute assertion for argument. Yet this, so far as I am apprised, is the course which has been adopted to disprove the natural ability of man to obey. Those passages which mean aversion and obstinacy in sin, and the certainty of his perdition, without the special grace of God, are assumed to mean a natural impossibility. The terms 'cannot and unable,' which have no reference to his capacity as a free agent, and respect only and wholly his character and obstinacy as a sinner, are quoted, unexplained and unproved, in respect to their assumed meaning; and, merely by the reiteration of unexplained sound, the doctrine of moral inability is attempted to be battered down, and that of a natural inability to be established. But who does not see that I have an

equal right to assume the meaning of moral inability as the only meaning of the term, and, by the power of reiterated assertion, to beat down my adversary, as he has to battle me with unexplained words, taken for granted, by force of mere assertion; and that both of us, in doing so, would violate the laws of philology and correct controversy? As soon as the meaning of the texts, applied to man and quoted to prove his natural inability, are explained, it appears that they respect his character as a sinner, and not his constitution as a free agent, and are nothing to the purpose to prove what they are quoted to prove. If they mean a moral inability, the mere voluntary aversion of a free agent to obey the gospel, then they do not mean or teach the natural impossibility of believing, and the moral inability of the sinner may be perfectly consistent with the natural ability of the free agent.

With this lamp in our hand, all becomes clear. Whenever the Bible speaks of inability in moral things, it speaks of the sin of the will, its aversation to good. Yet where has Dr. Wilson, in the whole course of his argument in support of his charges against me, ever once defined the term 'cannot?' where has he recognized this obvious distinction, and the manner of its application? He has insisted on a a single meaning of the term, which meaning he assumes, and then denies all right of explanation. As soon as the word is explained, he is gone. These words, like all other words, are to be tried by the principles of exposition, by the established *usus lo-*

quendi, and not by their sound on the tympanum of the ear; or else Jesus Christ might as well have spoken Greek to men who understood nothing but English. Take an illustration on this subject: Suppose an assault was committed; the case is carried into court, where the assault is admitted, and the only question arising, is a question of damages. A witness appears and is asked, Did you see this assault? Yes, I saw A strike B. How hard did he strike him? I don't know; I can't exactly tell *how* hard; A was a very nervous man. 'Oh!' cries the lawyer in favor of A, 'if he was a very nervous man, he must have been too feeble to hurt him much.' Another witness is introduced and asked, How hard did A strike B? I can't exactly tell, he says. What sort of a man was A? Oh! he was a very stout, brawny man; a very nervous, athletic man. 'Then,' says the attorney on the other side, 'if he was a nervous man, no doubt he must have hurt my client exceedingly, and he is entitled to heavy damages.' On this a dispute arises as to the testimony, and it turns on the meaning of the word '*nervous*.' One of the attorneys brings into court Webster's Dictionary, and shows that nervous means, of weak nerve, feeble: and there he stops. Would this settle the question? Would this determine the meaning of the testimony? Just so with the word inability. It has two meanings, according as it is applied. It may either mean a total want of power, or a total want of inclination.

4. The *subject*, and the circumstances of the

case, forbid the construction of a natural impossibility, as relating to man in the case of duty; because the subject is admitted to be a free agent, and free agency is known and defined, and by the Confession itself is admitted to be, the capacity of choice, with power of contrary choice. A free agent to whom spiritual obedience is a natural impossibility, is a contradiction. By the laws of exposition, I am entitled to all the collateral evidence which can be thrown upon the meaning of the Confession, from the several sources of expository knowledge already enumerated, and which I will not here recapitulate. Dr. Wilson insists that man is able to do nothing—but NOTHING is a slender foundation on which to rest the justice of the Eternal Throne, in condemning men to everlasting punishment, and feeble indeed would be God's gripe upon the conscience. But it will be easy to show that the strongest passages relied on to prove natural inability, are forbidden to be interpreted in that sense, by the established laws of exposition. For example, it is said, John vi. 44: 'No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.' The nature of the inability here declared, is indicated by the kind of drawing which is to overcome it. This is taught in the verse immediately following, and elsewhere in the Bible. 'It is written in the prophets, they shall be taught of God: every man, therefore, that hath *read* and hath *learned* of the Father cometh unto me.' The drawing of the Father, then, without which no man can come, according to

prophetic exposition, quoted and sanctioned by our Redeemer, is in being 'taught of God,' in *reading* and *learning* of the Father, and this is precisely the doctrine of our Confession. 'God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of his word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners.' 'I draw them by the cords of love and with the bands of a man.' That is the drawing: with the bands of a man, not by the attraction of gravity. Suppose the planets should stop in their course, would God, do you think, attempt to overcome the *vis intertiæ* of matter by the 'reading, and especially the preaching of his word?' Would he send the ten commandments to start them? or would he 'draw them with cords of love and the bands of a man,' to move onward in their orbits? Yet the Confession, and the Catechism, and the Bible, all as certainly teach that the impediment to be overcome is overcome by moral means: by the truth, by the word of God, by the reading, and especially the preaching of his word, made effectual by the Holy Spirit. It cannot, therefore, be any natural inability; any such inability as renders believing a natural impossibility, which is removed in regeneration. But it is said, 'the carnal mind is enmity against God,' and that this is an involuntary condition of mind. But is it a natural impossibility for any enemy to be reconciled to him? The text does not say that fallen man cannot be reconciled to God; but it says that the carnal mind cannot be subject to the law: 'It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' Carnality can

never be so modified as to become obedience. Again, the 'natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. Does this mean that an unconverted man can have no just intellectual conceptions of the gospel, of truth, and duty, in order to his obeying it? How then can he be any more to blame than the heathen, who have never heard of Christ? And what better condition are men in, with the Bible, which they cannot understand, than the heathen are with no Bible at all? But if by receiving and knowing be meant, a willing reception and an experimental knowledge, which is a common use of the terms, then the text teaches simply, that until the heart is changed, there can be no experimental religion in the soul; that a holy heart is indispensable, not to intellectual perception, but to spiritual discernment, to christian experience.

5. The Bible not only does not teach the natural inability of man to obey the gospel, but it teaches directly the contrary. The moral law itself bounds the requisition of love by the strength of the subject. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God—with what?—with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind;—and with what else?—with all thy STRENGTH. But if heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, constitute no strength—how is he bound by such a command as this? In the same manner, constitutional powers, bearing such a relation to obedience as constitutes obligation, are recognized in the Bible. See Isaiah v. 1, 2, 3, 4.

Was there nothing in the soil and culture of this vineyard which rendered fruit, in respect to the soil, a natural possibility? But the vineyard was the house of Israel, the owner was God, and the fruit demanded was evangelical obedience: and God, the owner, decided that what he had done, rendered obedience practicable, and punishment just. He calls upon the common sense and common justice of the universe to judge between him and his vineyard. He asks whether he had not done that for his vineyard which laid a just foundation for it to bring forth good, instead of wild grapes, and declares that the bringing forth of wild grapes was a thing enormous; and goes on to pronounce judgment upon his vineyard.

So in the parable of the talents. The owner committed a certain portion of his money to every man according to his *several ability.* These servants again, represent the Jewish nation. The talents represent gospel privileges; the improvement to be made believing—and the misimprovement sloth and unbelief. The trust was graduated in proportion to the ability of each man. There was ability therefore, and the servant who improved his trust, received a reward. But the servant who made excuses, pleaded his natural inability: I knew that thou wert a hard master, reaping where thou hadst not sown, and gathering where thou hadst not strewed; (worse than the taskmasters of Egypt;) and I was afraid. I dared not undertake to do anything with my talent. thought the safest way would be to hide it, and run no risk. But his Lord said to him—Thou wicked and slothful

Ability, the ground and measure of obligation.

servant, thou knewest that I was a tyrant, demanding the improvement of gifts not bestowed. How couldst thou suppose, then, that I would not exact the improvement of what was given? Why didst thou not put my money to the exchangers? and then I should have received my own with usury. Do I demand effects without causes? Take him away, thrust him into outer darkness: he has libelled his Maker, he has slandered his God.

6. The broad principle is laid down in the Bible, that ability is the ground and measure of obligation. According to that which a man hath, and not according to that which he hath not; to whom much is given, of him shall much be required; but to whom little is given, of him shall little be required, is the language of the equitable Ruler of the world. But if ability is not needful to obligation, why observe this rule? why not reverse it? Why not require little of him to whom much is given, and much from him to whom little is given? Present this principle to any man but an idiot, and see what he will say to such a proceeding. There is not a human being whose sense of justice would not revolt from it. And shall man be more just than God? Nor is the principle of graduating responsibility by ability, a limited rule of the divine government, applicable only in particular cases; the rule is general; it is universal; it applies to every free agent in the universe.

7. The manner in which all excuses are treated in Scripture, which are founded on the plea of inability, confirms our exposition. There were impenitent sin-

ners of old, who plead a natural inability of obedience. In the time of the prophet Jeremiah, there were those who alledged that God's decrees created the unavoidable necessity of sinning. They said they could not help it. But God, by his prophet, instead of conceding the doctrine, repelled it with indignation.

'Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?' *Jer.* vii. 8, 9, 10.

Does God approve of men's reasoning, when they say, God has decreed it, and God executes his decrees, and a resistless fate moves us on to evil. Far from it. In what stronger language could the Lord speak to hardened and impudent men, who laid their sins at his door? Now the fall itself was some how comprehended in God's decrees; and if it be true that the fall took away all man's natural ability, wherein were those Jews wrong? Their excuse was that their sins were produced by the fatality of God's decrees. They were delivered to do all these abominations. Their fathers had eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth were set on edge. By the sin of Adam they had lost all free agency, and therefore they were not to blame; all was just as God would have it; an inexorable fate drove them on, and how could they resist the Almighty? But if God did indeed require spiritual obedience from men who lay

in a state of natural impotency, how is it that he frowned so indignantly, when they pleaded their impotence in bar of judgment?

Again, in Ezekiel, xxxiii. 10, we have the following language:

'Therefore, O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel, Thus ye speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins be on us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live?'

Now, suppose they had been born blind, and God had commanded them to see, and they had replied, Our blindness and darkness sits heavily upon us, and we pine away in it, and it is impossible for us to see, how then can we escape thy displeasure? Would God in such a case have answered:

'I have no pleasure in your blindness, which it is impossible for you to remove. As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in your blindness, therefore open your eyes and see ye?'

Does God call men to turn, when a natural impossibility lies in the way, and punish them forever, for not turning? That is not like God. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? The representations of the Bible attach obligation and accountability to a free agent as being able to choose both ways; as having ability to choose life, or to choose death. For what is written in Deut. xxx. 11—20:

'See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; In that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his

Natural power essential to obedience as well as disobedience.

judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him.

If it be said that men are free to evil and accountable for doing wrong, I answer, if God commanded men to sin, that might suffice; but if he commands them to stop sinning, and they have no free agency to do it, and it is a natural impossibility to stop, how does free agency to do what is forbidden create obligation to abstain and do what is commanded, when they have no power? Besides, could they not sin without ability to sin? How then can they obey without ability to obey? And if they have free agency to obey, that is just what I am contending for. For they can no more obey without natural power, than they can sin without natural power. If man, as a free agent, has not natural power to obey, then commands, and exhortations, and entreaties, and expostulations might as well be addressed to men without the five senses; commanding them on pain of eternal death to see, hear, feel, taste, and smell. This argument was used by Pelagius and Arminius; and in the forms they urged it, was easily answered; they brought it forward to prove not only that man is naturally able to obey God, but to prove that he actually does obey the gospel without special grace, that his will is under no bias from the fall, and that his moral

ability is so unperverted, that it is sufficient without regeneration, to do all that God has commanded. Augustine maintained that the will was entirely struck out of balance; Pelagius on the contrary maintained, that it remained in delightful equilibrio, and consequently that no grace of God was needed to determine it to a right choice, insisting that dependence on grace to change the will was inconsistent with commands and exhortations, &c. But Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and all the reformers fully admit the ability of man as a free agent, and deny that his moral inability and dependency as a sinner, supersede obligation, invitation, and command. *The natural ability of man is a point which has never been controverted by the church at large, and generally only by heretics.* The orthodox portion of the church of God never has questioned it; and denied only moral ability, i. e. a right disposition or will, in opposition to the Arminian and Pelagian heresies.

XV. The Scriptures and our Confession both teach, that God is not the author of sin—that he neither creates it, nor devises plans, nor adapts means, to break the force of his own laws and administration, so as purposely to prevent obedience and produce sin, as the natural and necessary result of his own power and agency. You may search the word and works of God with a microscope, and you cannot find any such thing as a plan tending to prevent obedience and to produce sin. You may light up ten thousand suns and search every cavern and deep recess of nature, and you can find no such thing. In

The whole tendency of God's government is to prevent sin.

the development of his character, law, gospel, and providence, he has produced powerful means of drawing his subjects to obedience, unobstructed by any counteracting influences designed to prevent obedience and produce sin. He has given no law against the moral law, and affords no motives to disobedience, and administers no providence to defeat the administration which corroborates the powers of law. All the tendencies of his government, law, gospel, and providential administration, are self-consistent and in unison. God tempteth not any man, neither can he be tempted of evil. The whole tendency of his government in the hands of the Mediator is, to lead the ruined rebel to break off his sins by repentance, and not to induce him to persist in them. God is not the author of sin. It comes against the whole moral influence of his glorious character, law, gospel, and government. Nor in its existence in fallen man, 'is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.'

Of course I reject all theories of the origin or continuance of evil, which make God the author of sin.—The Gnostic that he placed man in contact with sinful matter, to be unavoidably corrupted—or the Manichean, that it is a part of the created substance of the soul—or that it is a created instinct of our nature, perverting the will by the power of a constitutional necessity—or that all agency in creatures is impossible, and therefore, that God creates sinful and holy exercises, by a direct efficiency in such quantities and pro-

portions as please him. I hold, with the Confession, the doctrine of free agency, before and since the fall, sufficient, while upheld, to make holiness obligatory, and account for sin without supposing God to be its author, in a way which would make him contradict himself, and oppose his own laws and government, and do violence to the will of the creatures, and destroy the liberty of choice, determining it to evil by an absolute necessity of nature. To the system of free agency, then, which teaches that to fallen man 'no ability of any kind' exists to obey the gospel, or is required to constitute a perfect obligation to do so, and a just desert of eternal punishment for not obeying; I oppose the testimony of the whole orthodox church, and that of the Bible.

XVI. Finally. The Confession of Faith teaches plainly and unanswerably, the free agency and natural ability of man, as capable of choice, with the power of contrary election.

In confirmation of this position, I refer to the Confession, chap. ix. sec. 1.

'God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature, determined, to good or evil.'

Now if this declaration has respect to man, as a *race*, if the term man, as here employed, is generic, including Adam and all his posterity, then the passage quoted settles the question. The whole turns on—what is the meaning of the word *man?* Because, if it means man as *fallen*, if it means Adam's posterity, my opponent is gone—the ground is swept

The term 'man' used in a generic sense.

from under him. He must prove that man means Adam, and Adam only, and Adam before the fall, or else the Confession is against him. Now, what is the subject of the chapter to which this section belongs? It respects free will; i. e. free will in the theological sense of that phrase, as the doctrine was discussed between Augustine and Pelagius, a considerable time since the fall, and has respect to man in the generic sense. That this is so, is plain, from the scriptural references, quoted in support of the positions taken. If the declarations of the chapter had respect solely to Adam, the scriptural references would be *to Adam;* but these references, do not refer to him, but do refer to his fallen posterity. They drive the nail, and clinch it. See what they are:

'But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.' James i. 14.

'I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.' Deut. xxx. 19.

These are the scriptural proofs, selected and adduced by the Assembly of Divines, as exhibiting the scripture authority on which the declarations in the chapter are made: and what are they? Listen to them:

'God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined, to good or evil.' Confess. of Faith, ix. 1.

Man in a state of innocency had power to do good or evil.

If this means Adam, all I say is, that they use very bad grammar, and have made a most wonderful mistake in the references quoted. To say that the will of Adam before the fall, is neither forced nor determined by necessity, is nonsense, and makes the second section tautology.

The first, if it refers to Adam in innocency, says he had natural liberty of will, and was not forced or determined by necessity to choose good or evil; and the second section repeats the same thing; that man in his state of innocency had freedom and power to do good or evil.

I take the question as settled then, that 'man' here means man as a *race*, and that 'will' here means the will of man as a race; and it is what I hold, and what all the church hold; and it is the fair meaning of the Confession. What follows in the next section, with respect to man in a state of innocency, is a confirmation and an illustration of the doctrine as thus explained.

'Man, in his state of innocency, had freedom and power to will and to do that which is good and well pleasing to God; but yet mutably, so that he might fall from it:' (Confess. of Faith, ix. 2.) i. e. his free agency included the natural power of choosing right or of choosing wrong.

Adam had the natural ability to stand, and he had it in a state of balanced power, in which he was capable of choosing, and liable to choose either way.

Then comes section the third, which contains a description of the change induced by the fall, a

The fall changed the will, not the constitutional powers.

change which respected the will of man, not his constitutional powers; a change in the voluntary use of his will.

'Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost'—

Lost! what? The natural liberty of his will, so that it is now forced and determined by an absolute necessity to good or evil? Not a word of it. It was not that; it was something else he lost: and thereupon turns the question between us. The Confession says:

'*Lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation;* so, as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.'

He lost 'all ability of will.' Does this mean that, in respect to the power of choice, his will fell into a state of natural inability? Not at all. He had the power of choice as much as ever. But he had lost all moral ability, that is, inclination to choose what was good. His will was altogether averse from it. He was altogether unwilling. He fell into an inability of will, i. e. into a state of obstinate unwillingness. This is the common use of terms until this day. Moral inability means not impossibility, but it means unwillingness. Man became 'dead.' But how? Not by the annihilation of his natural powers, not dead in respect to the natural liberty of his will, but dead in sin; so as not to be able, by his own strength (of will) to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.' I say

The words, 'able' and 'strength,' employed in a moral sense only.

'Amen!—this is my doctrine. The word 'able,' and the word 'strength,' are both employed in a moral sense, and in a moral sense only; and thus interpreted, the Confession is perfectly consistent with itself.

The fourth section of this chapter is a corroboration of the same position:

'When God converts the sinner, and translates him into the state of grace, he freeth him from his natural bondage under sin, and by his grace alone, enables him freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good; yet so as that, by reason of his remaining corruption, he doth not perfectly nor only will that which is good, but doth also will that which is evil.'

Frees him from what? From his free agency? from the constitutional powers of his being? No. Frees him from his bondage under sin, i. e. from his bias to evil, from his moral inability. And how is he freed? The Confession says it is by *grace*. Wonderful grace it would be, to restore his natural powers! One would think this was more like justice than grace. But it is argued, that if this bondage means mere obstinacy of will, man would not need divine aid. Indeed, so far is this from being true, that no creature does need divine aid so much as a free agent obstinately bent upon evil. My children were free agents, but they needed aid, to secure the performance of such duties as they were naturally able, but as fallen creatures disinclined to perform. None possess such a power of resistance, as a free agent under moral inability or aversion to good. It is a bias which he himself never will take away. God must deliver him;

and every thing short of divine aid, is short of his necessity. Men are sometimes fully sensible of this. I have heard of a man, under the power of the habit of intemperance, who cried out to his friends, Help me! help me! wake me up! save me, or I fall! The love of liquor had not destroyed his natural ability. But he felt that his moral ability—his ability of will to resist temptation—was gone. The distinction is plain and easy; and it is one that we can all understand in the every day affairs of life. If we see our friends in danger of being overcome by evil habit, we brace them against its power; we perceive their moral inability, and we bring them all the aid in our power. The phrase, 'to incline and enable,' is just as consistent with a moral inability as it is with a natural. Our natural bondage is that into which we are born by nature. Our constitutional bias to evil is called original sin. And it is grace, and grace alone, that enables a man to resist and overcome it. This I believe; this I hold; this I have felt. We shall be inclined to good alone, only when we reach the state of glory.

This reasoning is corroborated by the doctrine of the Confession, in respect to God's decrees.

'God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creature, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.'

No violence done to the will by the decrees of God.

Here are two points of doctrine laid down. First, that by the decrees of God no violence is done to the will of the creature: its natural liberty is not invaded or destroyed. It is not in God's decree that it should be forced or divested of its natural power, but the contrary.

There is nothing in God's whole plan that amounts to the destruction of the natural liberty of the will. Now if I can show that on the contrary, his decrees confirm it, why then, I carry my exposition. But what says the chapter?

'God from all eternity, did freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass.'

That God did ordain the fall, and all its connections and consequences, cannot then be denied. But how were these ordained? The Confession tells us how:

It was, 'so that no violence is offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.'

Here it is disclosed that the natural liberty of the will is not destroyed by the fall, but rather established; instead of taking away free agency, and the capacity of choice, God decreed to establish it. Whatever has been the wreck and ruin produced by the fall, the free agency originally conferred upon man, has not been knocked away. Therefore it was, that I pressed this book to my heart, because it assures me, that the righteous Governor of the world, has done no violence to these powers and faculties of man, on which his government rests.

But I am happy on this subject, in being able to adduce an authority altogether above my own. What did the Assembly of Divines mean by this word *contingency?* The celebrated Dr. Twiss, who was their prolocutor or moderator, must be high authority on that question. He says:

'Whereas we see some things come to pass necessarily, some contingently, so God hath ordained *that all things shall come to pass:* but necessary things necessarily, and contingent things contingently, that is, avoidably and with a possibility of not coming to pass. For every university scholar knows this to be the notion of contingency.'—Chr. Spec. vol. vii. No. 1. p. 165.

Dr. Twiss is speaking of natural and moral events, the only events which exist in the universe; and he says that God decreed that all things should come to pass; that natural events should come to pass necessarily; and that moral events, which are acts of will, and which he calls 'contingent things,' shall come to pass contingently; which he explains to mean avoidably and with a natural possibility of not coming to pass. He is speaking of the moral world, and he says that in the natural world all is necessary as opposed to choice; but that in the moral world all is free, as opposed to coercion, or natural necessity, or inability of choice; and that every act of will, though certain in respect to the decree, is yet free and uncoerced in respect to the manner of its coming to pass, and as to any natural necessity, always avoidable—not avoided, but according to the very nature of free

agency, always avoidable, in accordance with the language of the Confession, ch. ix. sec. 1. [quoted above.]

Now we shall show how God executes his decrees; and what says the Confession on this point? (See ch. v. sec. 2:)

'Although, in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first cause, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly; yet, by the same providence, he ordereth them to fall out according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently:' i. e. the volitions of the mind come to pass freely, and as opposed to any natural necessity, avoidably.

The account given of the actual effects of the fall, is a still further confirmation of our exposition; ch. vi. sec. 2:

'By this sin, they fell from their original righteousness, and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body.'

Also Shorter Catechism, Ques. and Ans. 17, 18:

Q. Into what estate did the fall bring mankind?

A. The fall brought mankind into a state of sin and misery?

Q. Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell?

A. The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called Original Sin;

together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.

If man lost the natural power of right choice, this answer should have been changed, and we ought to have been told, that the fall brought mankind into a state of natural impotency. But it says no such thing. It says it brought him into a state of sin. What! Can a man sin without being a free agent? The effects here stated are, the loss of holiness and the corruption of his nature. But surely the corruption of nature is not the annihilation of nature; his nature must still exist in order to be corrupt. What then is its corruption? It is deatin sin, not the death of its natural powers. There is no destruction of the agents. But there is a perversion of those powers which do constitute their agency. So much for the testimony of the Confession of Faith.

I said that in expounding a written instrument we are always to consider the attributes of the subject concerning which it speaks; that its language is to be expounded, in reference to the nature of the thing. The Confession teaches that man was endowed with a natural liberty of choice, and has suffered no perversion but that which consists in a wrong exercise of his will. Its natural liberty remains, but in regard to moral liberty, i. e. an unbiased will, the balance is struck wrong.

Such are my views of the natural ability of fallen man, and my evidence that they are just.

It is the ability of an intelligent, accountable agent

for the exercise of his own powers under law, and in the view of motives, and with a sense of obligation and just liability to reward and punishment. Nothing short of this distinguishes man from animals, or dust and ashes. If some such power be not real, no difference can be pointed out between free agency and fatality, and no reason assigned why God should govern man by moral laws, and hold him accountable rather than any other of the products of his power and natural government. I say, therefore, with Tertullian—

'A law would not have been imposed on a person who had not in his *power the obedience due to the law; nor again would transgression have been threatened with death, if the contempt also of the law were not placed to the account of man's free will.*

'He who should be found to be good or bad by necessity, and not voluntarily, could not with justice receive the retribution either of good or evil.' p. 64.

MORAL INABILITY.

I now proceed to explain the doctrine of Man's Moral Inability, as understood in every age by the orthodox church, and as taught in the Confession of Faith and the Bible, and as I hold and teach it.

I am aware that the doctrine of a moral inability, as distinguished from natural impossibility, is regarded by some as a fiction of the imagination, or a mere metaphysical subtility, of no practical utility; while all its tendencies are powerfully to the territories of dangerous error. But when the nature and evidence of moral inability shall have been stated, it will appear, as I hope, to such persons, that they have not, as Edwards says, 'well considered the matter;' and that there is a distinction between natural impossibility and a moral inability, palpable and salutary, without denying the dependence of man for effectual calling on the special influence of the Holy Ghost, or implying the doctrine of self-regeneration and salvation without an atonement by the deeds of the law.

By natural inability I understand, that which an agent, though ever so willing, cannot do from defect of capacity; and by moral inability, that which his capacity as an agent renders possible and makes obligatory, and which is prevented only by his own

uncoerced choice, including in the term not only single consecutive volition, but that general and abiding decision of the mind for God or against him —which constitutes holy or unholy character, and includes, what Edwards denominates, 'the will and affections of the soul,' and Turretin, 'a habit of corrupt will.'

This voluntary hindrance of spiritual obedience is called inability, in accordance, as I shall show, with the uniform use of speech in all the languages of men, applying the terms cannot, unable, &c. to whatever is prevented by the slightest disinclination, up to the most terrible obstinacy of will. In reference to spiritual obedience, it is called inability, also, I have no doubt, from the great and universal difficulty expeperienced by man in changing from a wrong to a right decision of mind in respect to God and duty, as well as from the absolute certainty that without the Holy Ghost, the obstinacy of the human will, will produce its deadly results with a certainty equal to the connexion between natural causes and their effect, though not in the same manner, or with the same results as to accountability and desert of punishment. It is called in the Creeds of the Reformation, and in our own Confession, inability of will—because spiritual obedience is prevented only by the perverse action of the will; and to indicate that free agency and natural ability never avail in fallen man, to overcome the bias of his will to evil, under the combined influence of original and actual sin; that with the ability to choose right, resulting from free agency and

creating obligation, he actually chooses wrong, and only wrong, until renewed by the Holy Ghost.

It is called a moral inability also in the language of Turretin.

1. 'Objectively, because it has respect to moral duties. 2. As to its origin, because it is brought on one's self; which arises from voluntary corruption, voluntarily acquired by the sin of man. 3. As TO ITS CHARACTER, (FORMALITER,) BECAUSE THAT IS VOLUNTARY AND CULPABLE WHICH IS FOUNDED IN A HABIT OF CORRUPT WILL.'

By all this I understand Turretin to mean, that the moral inability of man is a reality—is distinct from a natural impossibility, and is called moral, because it respects the aversion of mind to the performance of spiritual duties, brought upon the race, by the voluntary transgression of Adam, and eventuating in a habit of corrupt will. To all of which I subscribe.

It is in this sense that the term moral inability is used by Edwards—'We are said to be naturally unable to do a thing which we cannot do if we will, because what is commonly called nature, does not allow of it.

'Moral inability is the want of inclination, or, a contrary inclination.'

This impotency of will to good, according to the Bible and our Confession, and the received doctrines of the church—includes the constitutional bias to actual sin, produced in all men by the fall, anterior to intelligent, voluntary action, which, though it destroys not that natural liberty with which God

hath endowed the will, nor forces, nor determines it by any necessity of nature to the choice of evil instead of good—does, nevertheless evince, that mankind are, as Edwards says—'under the influence of a prevailing, effectual tendency to that sin and wickedness, which imply their utter and eternal ruin.'

To this bias isadded in fallen adult man, that terriffic decision of the mind in favor of the world and against God, which never changes, but under the special influence of the Spirit in our effectual calling.

To which may be added, the formidable, accumulating influence of habit, which, though it forces not the will, or determines its perverse obstinacy by any necessity of nature, does yet in accordance with the known laws of perverted mind, powerfully corroborate the perverting influences of both original and actual sin, by impairing the moral sensibilities of the soul, and the power of motive to good, while it fearfully augments the temptations to evil, and facilitates the liability, and diminishes the resistance to a compliance.

This is the view of the subject which is recognized in our Confession, and taught in the Bible, and held forth in the creeds and standard orthodox works of every age, as the received doctrine of the church.

In my preaching, I have not been accustomed to employ the terms natural and moral inability, because they are the technical terms of theological controversy, around which prejudice has gathered odium and mistake. But in the present case I have no other

alternative, because it is on these technical terms that the whole controversy turns.

I say, then, that our Confession, while it teaches unanswerably the free agency and natural ability of man to choose right as well as wrong, teaches with equal clearness his moral inability as consisting in a settled aversion of will to all spiritual obedience, until called efficaciously by the word and Spirit of God.

1. There is no necessity for interpreting the terms of the Confession, as applied to fallen man, to mean the natural impossibility of obedience.

The various phrases expressing inability, are by common use in all languages applied to express whatever is prevented voluntarily, either by slight disinclination, or the most powerful, immutable decision of the mind. We use the terms cannot, unable, &c. continually to express whatever for the slightest reasons we do not find it convenient or feel inclined to do, and where no natural impossibility exists or is thought of. As there is, therefore, no necessity to interpret the terms inability, and unable, as applied to fallen man, as teaching the natural impossibility of obedience—so also from the established use of the terms in all languages, there is no authority for doing it.

The decision and permanence of sinful preference, affords no evidence of its natural and unavoidable necessity.

Edwards has shown that certainty and uniformity of right or wrong action does not decide the manner of it as being voluntary or coerced.

He shows, in accordance with our Confession, that

God is free in his decrees and their execution, as opposed to the coercion of fate; and that Christ, though his character and life were foretold and certain, and he went as it was written of him, acted nevertheless with entire and uncoerced voluntariness. On the same principle Nebuchadnezzar and Judas, and sinners given up of God, though their conduct may be certain as a matter of fact, is not certain by a coerced necessity, but in the highest sense *free* and accountable, and such throughout are the implications of the Confession and the Bible. Because the moral inability of man therefore, is as immutable to all motive and human effort, as the effects of natural causes, it does not follow that it is made certain and immutable by a natural necessity.

The doctrine of the moral impotency of man is not inconsistent with any other of the doctrines of the Bible.

It is not inconsistent with the doctrine of our entire and absolute dependence for regeneration on the special influence of the Holy Spirit; for, while it includes a natural ability of obedience, as the ground of obligation, it teaches the certainty of its obstinate perversion, creating in point of fact a necessity of the Holy Ghost to renew, as real and as great as if the impediment were a natural impossibility. It no more implies self regeneration, than if the work of the Spirit in subduing the will, consisted in creating new faculties; the influence of the Spirit to make man willing being just as indispensable to his salvation, as if it were indispensable to make him naturally able.

Difficulty of choosing right, arising from moral impotency.

Nor does that ability to obey, whose exercise is prevented by choice, imply that it is an easy matter for man to repent and turn to God, in and of himself; for every thing which is possible as a matter of duty is not therefore easy. I agree therefore with Turretin 'that man, laboring under such an inability, is falsely said to be able, if he wishes,'—implying that a sinner's wishes may change a heart fully set on evil. 'For though the phrase may to some extent be tolerated, understood concerning the natural power of willing, which, in whatever condition we may be, is never taken away from us; yet it cannot be admitted when we speak of the moral disposition of the will to good, not only to willing but to willing rightly.' For, though in respect to the possibility and corresponding obligation there can be no excuse; nevertheless in respect to the difficulty, nothing which the mind can lawfully be commanded to do, can be more difficult. It is difficult to resist the original bias of the mind to actual sin; difficult to relinquish the chief good located on earth, and set our affections on things above; and difficult to reverse the long accumulating tendency of the habitual indulgence of our evil way. The Bible, therefore, represents it though a reasonable, yet a difficult thing for a lost sinner to save himself; so difficult that none do it, and that God, in doing it, makes glorious displays both of power and grace; and every sinner and every saint, in working out his salvation, finds the scriptural representation true. The inattentive find it difficult to resolve upon immediate attention; and

The Confession teaches an inability other than a natural one.

difficult to fix their attention when they have done it. The stupid find it difficult to awaken themselves to feel and realize anything: and the awakened find it difficult to see and feel their sins, and the great evil of sin; and when convinced of sin, difficult to repent and come to Christ. And when the sinner is converted, it is so difficult to maintain a spiritual frame and holy resolutions, and watchfulness, and prayer, and perseverance, that, for all that is past, and all that is to come, he says, by the grace of God, I am what I am.

The terms of the Confession preclude the interpretation of a natural impossibility, as their only meaning, and cannot be so interpreted, without making the Confession contradict itself.

According to a well established rule of interpretation, no instrument is to be so explained as to make it contradict itself, without necessity, and when it is just as easy to harmonize all its parts, by adopting a different interpretation. Now if I have not proved that the Confession, as I interpret it, is sustained by other collateral arguments in addition to that which I have drawn from the Bible, then I shall despair of ever successfully expounding a document in the world. I never have seen so much light thrown on any one point of exposition before. Does not the Confession speak of inability other than a natural one? Does it not teach expressly 'the natural liberty of the will' in fallen man to choose good or evil, uncoerced by fate or necessity? And after all is it a natural liberty that means nothing, and can do

nothing? Does 'inability of will' mean a natural impossibility of exercising that 'natural liberty of the will' in the choice of good; and that it is coerced by a natural necessity to the preference of evil? Does the Confession contradict itself? We are not at liberty, then, to make it in one set of terms deny an ability, which it has asserted in another. And when it declares in appropriate phraseology the natural liberty of the will, it cannot mean to contradict in its account of moral impotency what it had before asserted with respect to its ability to choose, as opposed to fate. I may be able in one sense, and unable in another. The Confession, in fact, interprets itself. (And this, I suppose, is what Dr. Wilson means, when he says, we must receive the language of the Confession without any explanation.) I agree with him, that on many points it needs no explanation. It guards against its own perversion, and its language is such as I should think it almost impossible to misunderstand.

Let us see what is the language which it holds in chap. 6, sec. 4.

'From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions.'

Here is active aversion, not fatal necessity. The man is indisposed, he is disabled by being indisposed. But it has been said, that if a man needs help, it must be a natural inability under which he lies. This I deny. A man who lies under a moral inability needs aid as really as if were naturally unable; and the aid he

Loss of liberty of will does not mean loss of free agency.

needs is such as God alone can bring him. What Christian does not pray that God would help him? But does he mean that he has no strength of any sort? Not at all. He is afraid to trust his own heart. He prays for moral aid, for moral ability, for strength of purpose. Surely we are all agreed in this. We believe alike—for we pray alike. New School and Old School all confess, when they get before God, their impotency of will to good, and pray for help to will and to do. I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? We feel this impotency; and what we feel, God sees; and that which he sees he has testified.

Chapter ix. on Free Will.

'Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.'

When it says that man has lost all ability of will, it does not mean that he has lost all free agency. It does not mean, that he is not able, as a free agent, and bound to do that which is right, but that he has lost all *will* to do it. My soul! do I not believe this? Did I not feel it when God convinced me of sin? Full well did I feel it. Did I not fall at the footstool and tell the Lord that I was gone, that I was ruined and helpless, and never should come back to him, unless he put forth his hand to deliver me? If I ever preached any truth to dying men, with all my heart and with all my soul, it is the truth of man's total depravity

and inability; that his condition is desperate, and never will he turn and live, unless God shall look down from heaven and have mercy upon him. This is my doctrine; and it it is the doctrine of the Confession, which says, we are *averse* from all good. This language suits me. There is no catch in this, no quibble; I mean what I say; I fully and heartily believe that man is utterly *averse* to all good; that he is dead; dead in law and dead in sin—under the curse of God, and so will ever remain, until God quickens him by his Spirit and grace.

But let us see what the Confession says in sec. 4, chap. 9.

'When God converts a sinner, and translates him into the state of grace, he freeth him from his natural bondage under sin, and by his grace alone enables him freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good; yet so as that, by reason of his remaining corruption, he doth not perfectly nor only will that which is good, but doth also will that which is evil.'

'Enable' here does not imply that there is any natural inability. It means, inclines him to will. The Confession is orthodox; it says that no mere man is able, without divine aid, to keep God's commandments. That is my faith. I admit, however, that this was the spot at which I once stumbled, when, as I said, I was unable fully to embrace the Confession of Faith. I saw a difficulty here. I believed the Confession to mean just as Dr. Wilson now insists that it does mean; and in that sense I never could receive it. But on reflection, and with

those collateral lights which I have mentioned, I now understand it to speak the very truth, and I embrace it accordingly. I believe in the moral inability which it here declares; and I believe that moral inability to obey the law perfectly, will continue until the christian reaches his home in heaven.

But now let us hear what the Confession says upon effectual calling. I quote from chap. x. sec. 1.

'All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call by his word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good; and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ: yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.'

This enlightening I hold to be a divine illumination, and such as the Spirit of God alone can give. The phrase 'heart of stone,' which is employed in one of the texts cited as proof, is a metaphor; and so is the 'heart of flesh;' and this I believe is the only passage in the whole Bible where the term 'flesh' is employed to signify anything good. A heart of flesh manifestly means tenderness, susceptibility—in other words, a willing heart. Renewing the 'will,' that is, turning the will into a new direction. It is God who turns it. The sinner left to himself never will turn. But in

conversion God does not make a free agent. He turns a free agent. I am perfectly aware that some very good men suppose and assert, that the men of the new school (though that, by the by, is one of the most undefined of all designations; the term is like fog, it has no substance and no definite limits, but floats about in a sort of palpable obscure) hold to self-regeneration; and that the influence of the Holy Spirit is not necessary in turning a sinner from darkness to light. No man ever heard me teach such a doctrine. I have taught directly the reverse, and have put the doctrine of man's absolute dependence into as strong terms as I knew how to employ. If there are any stronger, I shall be glad to get hold of them. All who are in the habit of hearing me, know perfectly that the total depravity of man and his dependence on the power and help of the Spirit of God has been the great end of all my preaching; and as I well know has been, under God, the power of my preaching. I think, and always have thought, that the display of divine Omnipotence in converting rebel minds is greater by far than any exhibition of it, which ever has been made in the material world. And for an obvious reason; because mind has more power of resistance than matter. Some men seem to think, that if God does a thing by instrumentality, no opportunity is left for God to show his own great power. I think far otherwise. To me the truth seems weak enough in itself to leave ample space for the display of Omnipotence in making it effectual. I think that the act of God in regeneration, is the most stupendous

manifestation of omnipotent energy that has ever been made by the Almighty. Nor do I ever expect to see anything in God's works that will rival the solemn majesty of that greatest of all his operations, which, silent as the spheres, moves on in its resistless strength, making the hearts of rebels yield before it.

The next point in the confirmation of my exposition of the doctrine of the Confession, touching the moral impotency of man, is to show, that what it affirms on that subject, has been the doctrine of the church of God in all ages. And I shall now attempt to show that the fathers, while they held free will, in opposition to necessity and blind fate, nevertheless taught the moral inability of man, and his dependence on the Holy Spirit, just as I teach it. The first authority I shall produce on this point is that of Clement of Alexandria.

'Since some men are without faith and others contentious, all do not obtain the perfection of good. Nor is it possible to obtain it without our own exertion. The whole, however, does not depend upon our own will; for instance—our future destiny; for we are *saved by grace*, not indeed without good works.'—*Scott's Tomline*, vol. 2, p. 56.

Clement teaches in this passage man's natural ability and his moral inability with equal clearness.

Origen.—'The virtue of a rational creature is mixed, arising from his own free will, and the divine power conspiring with him who chooses that which is good. But there is need of our own free will, and of divine cooperation which does not depend upon

our will, not only to become good and virtuous, but also after we become so, that we may persevere in virtue.' p. 82.

I quoted him before, and showed that he was strong on the doctrine of free will, as opposed to fate. What I have now quoted may be considered as a good commentary upon the text:—It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Gregory Nazianzen.—'A right will stands in need of assistance from God; or rather the very desire of what is right is something divine, and the gift of the mercy of God. For we have need *both of power over ourselves and of salvation from God.* Therefore, says he, it is not of him that willeth, that is, not of him only that willeth, nor of him only that runneth, but of God that showeth. Since the will itself is from God, he with reason attributes every thing to God. However much you run, however much you contend, you stand in need of him who gives the crown.'

Gregory says that God is the author of faith—that he is the beginning of good in the soul; yet he is equally explicit on the doctrine of free will as opposed to fatalism. He holds that man has need of all that free agency can do, and all that grace performs beside.

Jerome.—'For the freedom of the will is so to be reserved, that the grace of the Giver may excel in all things, according to the saying of the prophet, except the Lord build the house, their labor is but lost that

build it. Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.' p. 146.

He declares, then, that though man is a free agent, yet regeneration is not the effect of his agency, but of God's free grace: as the preservation of a city is not the result of the watchman's care, but of God's unsleeping providence. Unless the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.

Theodoret.—'Neither the grace of the Spirit is sufficient for those who have unwillingness; nor, on the other hand, can willingness, without this grace, collect the riches of virtue.' p. 290.

Here we see that while the grace of the Spirit does not supersede the necessity of earnest attention and striving on the part of man, yet that no strivings of man will ever issue in a saving result, without Almighty grace. And grace is not to be expected while a man wilfully indulges in sloth and sleep, and puts forth no effort for his own deliverance.

But, before adducing quotations further, I would remark:

1. That every one of these confessions recognizes the liberty of the will, as free from coercion.

2. They all uniformly ascribe its perverse action to the effect of the fall, in *biasing*, yet not in coercing the will.

3. They all teach expressly that the bondage is the influence of this evil bias, and not a natural necessity of sinning; and taken together, they make

out a clear and consistent account of the natural ability of man, as a free agent and of his moral inability as a sinner, by reason of the bias of his will, as occasioned by the fall. If you shut your eyes and try their meaning only by your ear, you will hear it abundantly asserted, that man hath no liberty at all to desire good, and can of himself do nothing; but if you compare their own language with itself, you will perceive that they insist on the natural liberty of the will, which means natural ability, and teach only the impotence which results from the will itself, as biased and perverted by the fall, and that the distinction of man's natural ability as a free agent, and his impotency through the perversity of his will, runs through all the creeds, and is as plainly recognized in them as it is in our own Confession. It is this habit of interpreting by sound, which demands a running exposition, or I should need to say nothing in exposition of the quotations from the former of the creeds.

HARMONY OF THE PROTESTANT CONFESSIONS.

The doctrines of the early reformers in Europe were misunderstood by the Catholics, against whom they contended, who maintained that they were all a set of schismatics; that they were perpetually jangling among each other, so that no two of them could agree; and on this alledged fact, they strengthened the great argument of their church as to the necessity of having some head on earth to the visible church, whose decisions might settle controversies and give

uniformity to the faith. To meet this argument and repel it, the reformers got up this book, which is entitled, The harmony of the Confessions: the design of which was to show, by collating the Confessions of different evangelical churches, that the representation of their enemies was false; and that, in all fundamental points of faith, they were fully agreed.

From this book, I am about to show what the Protestant churches, just come out of the fiery furnace of Papal persecution, held on the subject of the *moral inability of man.* I have already shown what was the opinion of the fathers. I shall now show that of the reformers. And I begin with the Confession of Helvetia.

Confession of Helvetia.—'And we take sin to be that natural corruption of man, derived or spread from those our first parents unto us all, through which we being *drowned in evil concupiscences, and clean turned away from God, but prone to all evil, full of all wickedness,* distrust, contempt, and hatred of God, can do no good to ourselves, no not so much as think of any.' p. 58.

Here we see that man's inability does not consist in any want of understanding or conscience, or any other attribute or power of a free agent; but that it is the effect of that which is moral and voluntary; that it arises from the evil concupiscence of a corrupt nature, the willful unbelief of a wicked heart. Men cannot do what is good. Why? Because they have a moral inability to do it. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Again:

Free agency does not prevent sin, nor ensure obedience.

'We are to consider, what man was after his fall. His understanding indeed was not taken from him, neither was he deprived of will, and altogether changed into a stone or stock. Nevertheless, these things are so altered in man, that they are not *able* to do now, that which they could not do before his fall. For his understanding is darkened, and his will, which before was *free*, is now become a servile will: for it serveth sin, not *nilling*, but *willing:* for it is called *a will*, and not a nilling. Therefore, as touching evil or sin, man does evil, *not compelled either by God or the Devil, but of his own accord;* and in this respect he hath a most free will.' p. 60.

The fall is here said not to have deprived man of free agency; not to have turned him into a stock or a stone; but that his free agency, as it did not suffice to keep him from sinning, does not suffice to raise him from the ruins of the fall. Again, let us listen to the same Confession.

'The regenerate, in the choice and working of that which is good, do not only work passively, but actively. For they are moved of God, that themselves may do that which they do. And Augustine doth truly alledge that saying, that *God is said to be our helper. For no man can be helped, but he, that doth somewhat.* The Manichees did bereave man of all action, and made him like a stone and a block. p. 62.

Here we find that no man is helped by grace as a mere passive impotent machine; that he acts in working out his salvation; and that God helps him as a

free agent, and not as a mass of lead. A piece of lead cannot be helped to rise. It may be lifted. But it cannot be helped. And for the simple reason, that it hath no agency of its own to be helped.

The French Confession.—'Also, though he be endued with will, whereby he is moved to this or that, yet insomuch as that is altogether *captivated under sin*, it hath no liberty at all to desire good, as of itself, but such as it hath received by grace and of the gift of God. We believe that all the offspring of Adam is infected with this contagion, which we call *original sin*, that is, a stain spreading itself by propagation, and not by imitation only, as the Pelagians thought, all whose errors we do detest. Neither do we think it necessary to search, how this sin may be derived from one unto another. For it is sufficient that those things which God gave unto Adam, were not given to him alone, but to all his posterity: and therefore we in his person being deprived of all those good gifts, are fallen into all this misery and curse.' pp. 68, 89.

This Confession begins with the natural liberty of will to choose this way or that, and asserts only its moral impotence, as swayed by this bias of our constitution as affected by the fall.

'Confession of Belgia.—Therefore whatever things are taught, as touching man's free will, [i. e. unbiased will,] we do worthily reject them, seeing that man is the servant of sin, *neither can he do any thing of himself, but as it is given him from heaven:* for who is so bold as to brag that he is able to perform whatever he listeth, when as Christ himself saith, *no man can*

come unto me except my Father which hath sent me do draw him?'

From the context of this verse, and the Catechism, it appears, that this drawing is accomplished by divine teaching, the reading and preaching of the word, made effectual by his Spirit.

The Augsburgh Confession.—'And this corruption of man's nature comprehendeth both the defect of original justice, integrity, or obedience, and also concupiscence. This defect is horrible blindness, and disobedience, that is, to wit, to want that light and knowledge of God, which should have been in our nature being perfect, and to want that uprightness, that is, that perpetual obedience, that true, pure, and chief love of God, and those other gifts of perfect nature. p. 71.

We have seen that Luther, the author of this Confession, teaches the natural ability of man, as a free agent—that all actual sin is voluntary: and every term employed here implies a moral, not a natural defect, the want of holiness, and the power of evil desire.

All these witnesses of the truth hold to the freedom of the *will* as opposed to coercion or necessity, but deny its right inclination: and thus, while they justify God's requirements, they throw the sinner at the feet of sovereign grace. There he lies dead, hopelessly dead, not in body, not in natural power; but dead in sins, dead morally, dead in hatred to God, dead in unbelief, dead in willful and obstinate disobedience. And this distinction, once rightly apprehended and firmly fixed in the mind, is equal to twenty

thousand candles lighted up and carried through the Bible.

The demand, however, is often made—what difference does it make whether the inability of the sinner is natural or moral, since the certainty of his destruction without the Holy Ghost is just as great in one case as the other? and of what consequence is an ability never exerted, and a power that is never employed?

It might as well be said that muscular power unexerted, is as if it were not; that intellect perverted, is the same as idiocy; and conscience seared, is the same as if none had been given; that bread rejected to starvation, is the same as inevitable famine—as to say, that the voluntary perversion of all the competent powers of free agency, is the same thing as their nonexistence.

Does it amount to the same thing, whether a man cannot be temperate, or can be and will not? cannot be honest, or can be and will not? A man as a free agent, may indeed make his own destruction as certain as if he could not help it. But does it make no difference as to his character and desert, whether he perishes from the natural impossibility of being saved, or from a voluntary obstinacy in rejecting salvation? And does it amount to the same thing, in respect to the character of God, and the equity of his government, whether sinners fall under the operation of its penalties from a natural impossibility of laying hold on the provision for escaping them by a timely repentance, or by a voluntary obstinacy in despising the riches of his goodness? Provided a man, as a matter

of certainty, will die at a given time—does it amount to the same thing, whether he was killed unavoidably or committed suicide? was thrust off a precipice against his will, or threw himself off? was poisoned unwittingly, or purposely poisoned himself? was assassinated by the dagger of another, or thrust a dagger into his own bosom?

The difference between ability and inability in the subject, is the difference between the natural and moral government of God; in one of which his power, and wisdom, and goodness, are displayed in the superintendence of animals and instincts—in the other, in the administration of law, and the government of the immortal mind—in which his justice, and the richness of his goodness, and the exceeding greatness of his mercy are to shine forever. But does it make no difference, whether his justice is illustrated in punishing the impotent, or the unwilling? and his mercy in forgiving the nonperformance of impossibilities? or the wilful disobedience of reasonable requirements? It makes the difference between fatalism and free agency—confounding the pretension of the atheist to a temporary animalism, and compelling him to tremble under the responsibilities of an everlasting accountability, guilt and punishment.

It stops the pestilent breath of sceptics and cavillers, by which thousands of youthful minds are perverted—reasoning minds perplexed—pious minds distressed—and dissolute minds comforted with the hope of impunity in sin—because God is just, and sin is unavoidable.

It takes away one of the most prevalent temptations to the infidelity and atheism of the present day. In reading the works of atheists and infidels, and in attending to the objections of perverted minds, the exciting and exasperating cause seems to be, the supposition of accountability, associated with a constitutional, involuntary, unavoidable impotency. It is the belief that the Bible and the Calvinistic Confessions attach accountability and punishment to a natural impotency, which provokes and sustains three-fourths of the atheism and infidelity of our nation. They would admit the equity of a government, requiring according to what a man hath—but are provoked and enraged at the supposed injustice of punishment, unconnected with the possibility of obedience in the subject, and understanding, and being assured by masters in Israel, that the Bible and our Confession teach this, they turn and rend the Bible. The distinction between natural and moral inability, counteracts the antinomian perversions of the Calvinistic system. Through all periods of the church since the reformation, there have been antinomian Calvinists, and eras of outbreaking antinomian ultraism; and it has arisen from giving to the decrees of God and their execution, the force of irresistible causes, and to man the action of a passive machine; and though in some it has stopped in the frozen regions of intellectual formality and presumptuous reliance on God's efficiency, without human instrumentality—in the less intellectual and more heated and fanatical, it has degenerated not unfre-

quently into the most reckless licentiousness. So the same opinions operated among the Jews, as we learn by the terrible interrogations of the prophet—'Will ye lie, and steal, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and come into this house which is called by my name, and say we are delivered to do all these abominations? We have no power over ourselves. We do but obey the irresistible laws of our nature. We are delivered by the constitution God has given us, to do all these things.' The only difference between these ancient and modern licentious antinomians is, that the ancient denied accountability entirely; while the latter attach it to fatality, and bring in the grace of God to deliver from a natural impotency. All these obliquities of abused Calvinism have been pushed out, as I believe, by the system of a supposed fatality of will to evil.

The one is the occasion of great perplexity and suffering to the pious, and not unfrequently to christian ministers. They submit to it as very right, because God does it. But it is a dark and painful subject—they are embarrassed with it in their preaching, and still more embarrassed in their attempts to meet and answer the objections it creates, and at times are excruciated with its bearings on their common sense and feelings.

These different theories manifest their different results in preaching. The one tends to the earnest inculcation of immediate, spiritual obedience, after the example of prophets, apostles, and the whole

Bible. The other to the substitution of unregenerate prayers and strivings, with promises of gracious aid; instead of commanding and entreating all men every where to repent and fly to the Savior, by the wrath of God abiding on them, and the terrors of the Lord coming on them.

The different effects of our Confession, when expounded, as teaching a real free agency, or a real fatality, cannot be concealed or denied. By very large portions of the community, the construction of natural inability in our Creed, is supposed to teach fatality, associated with accountability, environing our church with the most rancorous hostility and immoveable prejudice, and raising up between ourselves and other denominations an impassable barrier, and giving them motive and opportunity to impede and annoy us. The most successful means employed againt our church in many places, have been the printing and circulation of our Confession, as a text book for comment. They do, indeed, misunderstand and misinterpret its meaning, but perhaps honestly, inasmuch as they are sustained by the exposition of some of the ministers of our own church—and should the highest judicature of our church pronounce the exposition correct, it would no doubt greatly facilitate their labor.

In addition to the Christian fathers and the Protestant Confessions, on the subject of moral inability, I refer to every one of the authorities I have quoted, to Luther, Calvin, Turretine, Witherspoon, Edwards, Bellamy, Hopkins, Dwight, Spring (father and son,)

Dr. Greene's and Dr. Witherspoon's views of moral inability.

Wilson of Philadelphia, Woods, Tyler and Dr. Matthews, as teaching the moral inability of man as consisting in an uncoerced voluntary aversion to spiritual obedience, not merely in consecutive volition, but in a permanent character, which is voluntary and culpable, because, as Turretine says, 'founded in a habit of corrupt will.' I close the quotations with Dr. Greene's account of moral inability. He says—

'I conclude the present lecture with a quotation from Dr. Witherspoon, in which my own views of the topic before us are correctly expressed—"As to the inability of man to recover himself by his own power, though I would never attempt to establish a metaphysical system of NECESSITY, of which infidels avail themselves in opposition to all religion, nor presume to explain the influence of the Creator on the creature; yet nothing is more plain, from scripture, or better supported by daily experience, than that man by nature is in fact incapable of recovery, without the power of God specially interposed. I will not call it a necessity arising from the irresistible laws of nature. I see it is not a necessity of the same kind as constraint; but I see it an impossibility, such as the sinner never does overcome."'—*Christ. Advocate*, 1831; p. 349.

If there be any doubt of Dr. Witherspoon's and Dr. Greene's meaning, the following exposition of Witherspoon himself may throw some light on the subject.

In this passage, Witherspoon, speaking the ap-

proved sentiments of Dr. Greene, disclaims the infidel system of natural necessity, asserts an incapacity in man to recover himself to holiness without the power of God—not, however arising from the irresistible laws of nature, not a necessity of the same kind as constraint, but such an impossibility as the sinner never does overcome. This is correct, and is a good statement of natural ability and moral inability.

'Since mention has been made of perfect conformity to the will of God, or perfect obedience to his law, as the duty of man, which is indeed the foundation of this whole doctrine, I think it necessary to observe, that some deny this to be properly required of man, as his duty in the present fallen state, because he is not able to perform it. But such do not seem to attend either to the meaning of perfect obedience, or to the nature or cause of this inability. Perfect obedience is obedience by any creature, to the utmost extent of his natural powers. Even in a state of innocence, the holy dispositions of Adam would not have been equal in strength and activity to those of creatures of a higher rank: but surely to love God, who is infinitely amiable, with all the heart, and above all, to consecrate all his powers and faculties, without exception, and without intermission, to God's service, must be undeniably the duty of every intelligent creature. And what sort of inability are we under to pay this? Our natural faculties are surely as fit for the service of God as for any baser purpose: THE INABILITY IS ONLY MORAL, AND LIES WHOLLY IN THE AVERSION OF OUR HEARTS FROM SUCH EMPLOYMENT. Does this then

take away the guilt? Must God relax his law because we are not willing to obey it? Consult even modern philosophers; and such of them as allow there is any such thing as vice, will tell you, that it lies in evil or misplaced affections. Will then that which is ill in itself excuse its fruits from any degree of guilt or blame? The truth is, notwithstanding the loud charge of licentiousness upon the truths of the gospel, there is no other system that ever I perused, which preserves the obligations of the law of God in its strength: the most part of them, when thoroughly examined, just amount to this, that men are bound, and that it is RIGHT and MEET and FIT that they should be as good and as holy as they themselves incline.' —*Witherspoon*, vol. 1, p. 45.

This is all which any one, from Justin Martyr to this day, has taught, concerning man's natural ability: viz. that he is able to obey, in respect to any hindrance arising from the irresistible laws of nature, including necessity of sinning of the same kind as constraint. Yet nothing is better supported from scripture, than that man by nature is in fact incapable of recovery, without the power of God specially interposed, though not 'an impossibility such as the sinner cannot, but such as he never does overcome;' for, as Howe says, 'notwithstanding the soul's capabilities, its moral incapacity, I mean its wicked aversation from God, is such as none but God himself can overcome. Now if all these writers, including Dr. Greene, 'disclaim,' as he does, 'any metaphysical system of necessity of which infidels

avail themselves in opposition to all religion,—any necessity of persisting in actual sin, arising from the irresistible laws of nature; and only insist that by the fall such an *aversation* of man's will from God has been occasioned as constitutes such an impossibility as the sinner never does overcome: I think it must be admitted that the whole orthodox church have been, and are, singularly united in the doctrine of man's natural ability of uncoerced will, and in his moral impotency, by reason of a biased and perverted will.

I subjoin a few examples of natural and moral inability, as the terms are familiarly employed in the Bible.

Natural Inability.—'Thou canst not see my face and live.' Moses desired the full orbed vision of the glory of God; but he is answered that it would destroy his life, his natural powers could not sustain the overpowering manifestation. David said of his child, after its death, 'can I bring him back again?' and Solomon, 'can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?' And God demands, 'can any hide himself that I shall not see him?' 'The Chaldeans answered, there is not a man upon the earth that can show the king's matter—tell his dream and its interpretation.' 'They which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence.' These are evidently specimens of natural inability, which no willingness or effort on the part of the agent could surmount.

Let us now look at the same terms as implying inability from disinclination or contrary choice—'aversation of will.'

Bible distinction between natural and moral inability—examples.

'With God all things are possible:' i. e. his natural power is equal to any act which is not in its own nature an impossibility. 'God who cannot lie'—'by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie.' Is God's omnipotence so limited that for want of power he could not utter falsehood? Is it not the infinite aversion of his holiness which constitutes the inability? 'The strength of Israel *will not lie.* Your new moons, and Sabbaths, and calling of assemblies, I CANNOT away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.' The *cannot* is explained to mean his aversion to hypocrisy in worship: therefore it follows, 'when ye make many prayers *I will not* hear.'

It is said of our Savior, that 'he must needs go through Samaria.' Was he compelled to go through Samaria; or did he simply, for sufficient reasons, choose to go that way?

'He could not do mighty works there, because of their unbelief.' Did the unbelief of man overpower divine omnipotence, so that Christ had no ability to work miracles; or did it furnish to his divine wisdom such reasons against it as made him *prefer* not to do it, expressed by the phrase *could not*, i. e. chose not to do it?

'Can the children of the bride chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them?' Doubtless they possess the natural ability. But the meaning is, will they choose to do it? Can they—i. e. will they?

'Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of?' It was the cup of suffering and of ignominy; and he meant not whether they could feel pain, and persecution,

and shame, (for he told them that they should,) but whether they were willing, and believed that they should continue willing to suffer with him—'can ye,' i. e. are you and shall you be willing?

'If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.' Did our Savior doubt whether God had the power to deliver him instantly from suffering? He knew he could do it; and only, as man, was not certain whether the agony he had already suffered might suffice, or the expiation demanded more. The phrase, if it be *possible*, means therefore, if it be wise and seem good in thy sight—if thou art satisfied and willing, let this cup pass, &c.; but if otherwise, not my *will*, but thy *will* be done. 'Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean:' i. e. thou canst do it, if thou art willing, implying as in the case before, that he could not cleanse him, if unwilling, calling unwillingness inability.

'This is a hard saying—who can hear it?' This means not that a sinner has no power to hear the humbling doctrine of total depravity? but, who, as we say, can bear it, i. e. be willing—be pleased with it? From that time, many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. It was those that could not hear such sayings.

'Ye cannot drink of the cup of the Lord, and the cup of Devils.' The natural ability of man qualifies him to sit at either table; but, while he prefers the table of Christ, he cannot, will not prefer the table of devils.

'The carnal mind is enmity against God, not sub-

ject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. If this means a natural inability, how does regeneration help the matter, as it includes the creation of no new natural powers or faculties? But if it means that the carnal mind is one which, by its friendship for the world, is at enmity with God, then it is plain that the mind which prefers the creature to God, cannot at the same time prefer God to the creature, though the hindrance is not natural, but the inability of the will—a moral inability—a duty prevented by a contrary choice.

'And Joshua said, Ye cannot serve the Lord, for he is a holy God.' The people understood him to say, that they had no moral ability—no heart to serve him, because they were so sinful. But they replied, 'Nay, but we will serve the Lord'—we have the ability, because we have the will.

'How can ye believe who receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God?' i. e. how can you believe, who prefer the praise of man more than the praise of God? who voluntarily set at naught Jesus Christ?

'The natural man cannot know the things of the kingdom of God;' but why can he not? what hinders?

Ans. 'If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them who are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the hearts of them that believe not.' 'No man can come unto me except the Father draw him'—i. e. by his hearing and being taught of God—making the reading, and especially the preaching of his word, the means of his effectual calling by his Spirit.

This distinction not confined to the Bible, but universal.

These examples, to which thousands might be added, decide that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, given by inspiration of God, do maintain the distinction between things whose existence is perverted for want of sufficient capacity in the agent, and things which lie within the limits of his capacity, and are only prevented by his choice—and that both are expressed by the terms cannot, impossible, unable, &c.—leaving it to the nature and connections of the subject to indicate the peculiar meaning—and never, except in theological controversy, or the cavillings of sinners, leading to any mistake.

I have said that this use of the terms cannot, unable, &c. to indicate those things which men are able to perform, but do not choose to do, is not a phraseology peculiar to the Bible, but is a mode of speaking, into which the universal mind of man in all nations, ages, and languages has fallen—from the familiarity of conversational and business dialect, up to the most labored efforts of argument and eloquence.

I ask my neighbor, who is on a sick bed, are you able to walk? and he replies, I am not. When restored to health, I inquire of him, can you assist me in my business to-day? and he replies, I cannot. I should be glad to oblige you, but my own business compels me to go another way—or in the language of the gospel, 'I must needs attend to my own matters.' How often when a man is provoked at the conduct of his neighbor, do we hear the indignant exclamation, 'it is too bad—I cannot bear it.' And how common is it to say of a man, strongly prejudiced

by interest or passion—he cannot hear, cannot see, cannot understand—and of the miser, when the cry of the widow and the fatherless assails him—he cannot give. Gold is his god, and his heart is made of stone.

The following examples from Edwards, and Buck, and a few other writers of eminence, will suffice both to illustrate the nature of the distinction between natural and moral inability, and the usus loquendi of theological, political, and literary authors.

Edwards.—'To give some instances of this moral inability—a woman of great honor and chastity, may have a moral inability to prostitute herself to her slave. A child of great love and duty, may be unable to be willing to kill his father. A drunkard, under such and such circumstances, may be unable to forbear taking of strong drink. A very malicious man may be unable to exert benevolent acts to an enemy, or to desire his prosperity; yea, some may be so under the power of a vile disposition, that they may be unable to love those who are most worthy of their esteem and affection. A strong habit of virtue, and a great degree of holiness, may cause a moral inability to love wickedness in general, may render a man unable to take complacence in wicked persons or things; or to choose a wicked life, and prefer it to a virtuous life. And on the other hand, a great degree of habitual wickedness may lay a man under an inability to love and choose holiness; and render him utterly unable to love an infinitely holy being, or to choose and cleave to him as his chief good.'

Examples from political and literary authors—Bacon—Johnson.

Buck.

Natural Inability.

'Cain *could not* have killed Abel, if Cain had been the weakest, and Abel aware of him.

Jacob *could not* rejoice in Joseph's exaltation before he heard of it.

The woman mentioned in 2d Kings vi. 29, *could not* kill her neighbor's son and eat him, when he was hid, and she could not find him.

Hazael *could not* have smothered Benhadad, if he had not been suffered to enter his chamber.'

Moral Inability.

'Cain *could not* have killed Abel, if Cain feared God, and loved his brother.

Potiphar's wife *could not* rejoice in it, if she continued under it.

Had that woman been a very affectionate mother, she *could not* have killed her own son in a time of plenty, as she did in a time of famine.

If a dutiful, affectionate son had been waiting on Benhadad in Hazael's stead, he *could not* have smothered him, as Hazael did.'

There is hardly an author of repute, from the time of Alfred to the present day—whether a poet, a historian, an essayist, or a metaphysician, who does not afford abundant examples of such use of the word *cannot*. I select a few from *known* and classical authors.

Lord Bacon.—'A man's person hath many relations which he *cannot* put off. A man *cannot* speak to his wife, but as a husband; to his son, but as a father; to his enemy, but upon terms.' p. 186.

Dr. Johnson.—In apologising for the omission of many business terms, his Dictionary says—'I *could not* visit caverns to learn the miner's language, nor take a voyage to perfect my skill in the dialect of navigation, nor visit warehouses of merchants, and shops of artificers, to gain the names of wares, tools, and operations of which no mention is made in books.'

Again, moral and natural inability are brought together in one sentence:

'There never *can* be wanting some who will consider that a whole life *cannot* be spent on syntax and etymology, and that even a whole life *would not* be sufficient.'

Shakspeare—who is as noted for using language as *men* in every situation use it, as he is for delineation of character—

'*Pray, I cannot.*
Tho' inclination be as sharp as will,
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent;
And, like a man to double business bound,
I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
And both neglect.'
'But O, what form of prayer
Can serve my turn? Forgive me my foul murder!
That *cannot* be; since I am still possessed
Of those effects for which I did the murder,
My crown, mine own ambition and my queen.'
Hamlet, Scene 2, Act 3.

Burke.—'I *cannot* remove the eternal barriers of creation.' This was a physical impossibility. But is the following, occurring just before in the same speech, *physically* impossible? 'I *cannot* insult and ridicule the feelings of millions of my fellow creatures, as Sir Edward Coke insulted one excellent individual (Sir Walter Raleigh) at the bar.' *Speech on Conciliation with America.*

Webster.—'This court, then, does not admit the doctrine, that a legislature can repeal statutes creating private corporations. If it cannot repeal them altogether, of course it *cannot* repeal any part of them, or impair them, or essentially alter them without the consent of the corporators.' But if the court had chosen to be unjust, *could they not* do this? Was it physically impossible?

So in the same speech he says in still stronger language—'In the very nature of things, a charter *cannot* be forced upon any body; no one *can* be compelled to accept a grant.'

But is it literally *impossible* for one to be *compelled* by *suitable power?*

So a few lines after—'It *cannot* be pretended that the legislature, as successor to the king in this part of his prerogative, has any power to revoke, vacate, or alter this charter.' But if one *chose* to pretend this, could he not?—*Webster's Speech in case Dartmouth College* vs. *William H. Woodward.*

Alexander Hamilton.—'It *cannot* be affirmed, that a duration of four years, or any other limited duration, would completely answer the end proposed.'—*Federalist*, No. 61.

Surely he knew that it *could* be affirmed, if any chose to.

Judge Story.—'Had the faculties of man been competent to the framing of a system of government which would leave nothing to implication, it *cannot* be doubted, that the effort would have been made by the powers of our Constitution.'—*Com. on Constitution*, (abridged) p. 147.

It certainly could not, *reasonably*, but would it be out of the power of *mind*, to do so?

But it is said, if men, as free agents, are in reality able to obey the gospel—how does it happen, that under such a pressure of motive, no one of the human race should ever have done it? and suppose we could not tell, and should admit that it is wonderful, as

God does—would it follow, that the reason is the natural impossibility of evangelical obedience? How could it be wonderful, that men do not of themselves obey the gospel, if the reason of it is that it is a natural impossibility? Is it wonderful, that men do not create worlds, or uphold or govern the universe? and why should the nonperformance of one impossibility be more wonderful than another? Can there be no uniformity of character without a coercive necessity producing it? Is not God of one mind, immutable, yet free? Are not the angels free who kept their first estate? And are not the fallen angels, though immutably wicked, as voluntary in their opposition to God, as the holy angels are voluntary in their obedience? As to the uniform disobedience of fallen man until renewed by the Holy Ghost, we have only to say, it is a matter of fact, well authenticated, that free agents do so—that it is a part of the terriffic nature of sinful man to baffle all motives, and be voluntarily but unchangeably wicked—persevering in rebellion, amid commands, prohibitions, promises, and threatenings, and the entreaties of the holy universe, and the weepings and wailings of the damned.

ORIGINAL SIN.

THERE is no subject in theology on which it is more difficult to speak with clearness and accuracy, than concerning the effects of the fall on the posterity of Adam, and the condition of the human mind before it arrives at the point of developing its intellectual and moral powers in actual sin. Nor is it wonderful, because neither intuition nor philosophy, nor personal communion with infant mind, makes us acquainted with its attributes. For this reason, when I have spoken on the subject, I have confined myself uniformly to the facts in the case revealed in the Bible, and discarded pertinaciously all theorizing.

What the precise errors are, which I am supposed to hold, I do not know; but from the evidence relied on, and the general course of the argument, it would seem that I am supposed to hold the Pelagian doctrine on the subject; that I deny that Adam was the federal head and representative of his race; that the covenant was made not only with Adam, but also with his posterity; that the guilt of his sin was imputed to them; that there is any such thing as native depravity; or that infants are depraved. That on the contrary, I hold and teach, that infants are inno-

cent, and as pure as Adam before the fall; and that each one stands or falls for himself, as he rises to personal accountability; and that there is no such thing as original sin, descending from Adam by ordinary generation; and that original sin is not sin, or in any sense deserving of God's wrath and curse.

Now every one of these assumed errors of my faith, I deny to be my faith. They ascribe to me opinions which I have never held or taught, and, as I shall show, there is no evidence that I ever taught one of them.

There is no more evidence of my holding or teaching the doctrines of Pelagius on original sin, than there is of my holding the doctrine of Mahomet, or the Brahmins, or the Pope. And though I doubt not that my direct evidence will be satisfactory, I will not omit that which is collateral and circumstantial. My religious education was superintended by pious Calvinists of blessed memory; and was as orthodox as the Assembly's Catechism, committed to memory, could make it. My convictions of sin were in accordance with my educational belief, and were deep and distressing, to the cutting off of all self-righteous hope from native excellence, or acceptable obedience in any action, social, civil, or religious, and laid me low in an agony of self despair, at the footstool of mercy, as unholy, totally depraved, justly condemned, and hopeless of regeneration and pardon but through the infinite sovereign mercy of God, through the merits of Christ. And the change which led me to hope, and has sustained me in my ministry, and

holds up my hopes of heaven, was, I full well know, 'not of blood, nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God;' so that if I am a Pelagian now, in my faith, few men can be more inexcusable in obliterating the teachings of a pious education, or the teachings of God's holy Spirit in my own distressing experience. But I have not gone back. I remember the horrid pit, and have also in fresh recollection the wormwood and the gall; and it is knowing the terrors of the Lord, and the love of Christ in my deliverance from them, which, if I am not deceived, have sustained and animated me in the work of the ministry. My theological education was under Dwight; and the authors which contributed to form and settle my faith, were Edwards, Bellamy, Witherspoon, Dwight, and Fuller. With such favorite authors for my guide, I have perceived in myself no retrocession from my early convictions. The doctrines which have constituted the body and power of my preaching, so far as it has had any, have been—the doctrine of God's decrees, the fall, the native and total depravity of man, election, effectual calling, or regeneration by the special influence of the Holy Spirit, justification by the merits of Christ through faith, and the perseverance of the saints; doctrines not commonly, I believe, found in alliance with Pelagian notions of native excellence and regeneration by moral suasion: and my preaching, if Pelagians or Unitarians have claimed me, has never seemed to satisfy them, or the results of it to correspond with what they claimed to be the proper fruits

of correct preaching; they have been the results of Calvinistic preaching, in convictions of sin and apparent conversions to God; such as Pelagians ridicule and denounce as fanaticism, instead of the fruits of the Spirit.

I have never been ultra Calvinistic, pushing my opinions towards antinomian fatality; nor have I at all more leaned to the doctrine of Pelagain free will and human self sufficiency; and in doctrine I am what I ever have been, having gained only the more accurate and comprehensive knowledge which use and study afford, and the facilities of presenting to every man his portion in due season, as the result of experience. All this however is nothing against positive evidence of defection. But no such evidence has been produced. The chief evidence relied on, is contained in my sermon on the native character of man. But that sermon was not designed to teach, and does not teach professedly, the doctrine of original sin. It has no direct respect to that doctrine. There is not a word in the sermon designed to state, explain, prove, or apply, that doctrine. The subject of the sermon is, THE TOTAL DEPRAVITY OF ADULT MAN, and affords not the least evidence of what my opinions are on the subject of original sin. By the laws of interpretation, therefore, you are not permitted to travel out of the record, and apply to infants and original sin, the language I have held with express and exclusive reference to the total depravity of adult man. It was occasioned by a local exigency in my congregation, the restiveness of a man of talents

and learning under the preaching of the doctrine of total depravity, especially in its denial of the native virtues and acceptable doings of unregenerate men. It was Pelagianism, in substance, that rose up against me, and the sermon was purposely constructed so as by explaining and proving the doctrine of total depravity, to put it down. The correctness of this representation, will be sustained by an analysis of the sermon.

ANALYSIS OF THE SERMON ON THE NATIVE CHARACTER OF MAN.

Its title precludes any reference to original sin; it is, the native CHARACTER OF MAN; meaning, of course, not his native constitution, but the character which all men first form who come up to personal action. *Native*, as applied to character, is sanctioned by correct theological use, and means the character which all men first sustain, in the exercise of their own powers, under the perverting influence of the fall.

The text has exclusive regard to adults, to regenerated man: 'Whosoever loveth is born of God.'

It is regarded in its exposition as holy love—the fulfilling of the law—the principle of evangelical obedience—religion—does not belong to men by nature—is never a quality of his heart by natural birth, and is the result of a special divine interposition which makes him a child of God. Both the text and introduction, therefore, respect regeneration in adult man.

It is the object of the sermon to prove, that man is not religious by nature—meaning by man, the race; and by 'not religious by nature,' that there is nothing

in the constitution of adult man, of which religion is ever the result, without a change of heart by the special influence of the Holy Ghost. The proof in every particular respects evidently and only adult man and actual sin.

Universal experience evinces that the supreme love of the world constitutes the first character of man. All men are conscious that they set their affections first supremely on the world, and not on God. Awakened sinners discover that they have no true love to God, and christians can look back to the time when evidently they had none.

The history of the world is inconsistent with the supposition of native religion—its idolatry, its animalism, gluttony, intemperance, and lust—its wars, frauds, violence, and blood—love to God and man in the hearts of all by nature, could not have made such a history as that of our world has been.

The Bible affords no testimony to the piety of man by nature—says nothing good of the human heart—not a syllable.

It ascribes to the heart of man by nature a character inconsistent with religion—*evil only*, deceitful, fully set on evil, desperately wicked, full of madness.

The scriptural account of childhood shows, that man is not born religious. Every imagination of the heart is evil from his youth—the wicked are estranged from the womb—no religion born with them.

All the generic descriptions of the race are such as preclude religion as the native character of man.

Man is the generic of the race. But what is man

that he should be clean? or the son of man that he should be righteous?

The world is another generic term, characteristic of the race. But it is a world which hated Christ, and whose friendship is enmity with God.

The flesh is another. But the carnal mind is enmity against God.

The whole world is divided into classes, and all men are described as holy or unholy, righteous or wicked. But never as righteous first, but always as wicked first, and as becoming righteous by the power of the Spirit.

It was while we were enemies that Christ died for us; and it is only by being reconciled, that we become religious.

It is the direct testimony of the omniscient God, that all have gone out of the way—become vile—none that do good, no not one.

The alledged universal necessity of a change to qualify men for heaven, is proof that they have no religion.

The reversal of this argument shows its force. If the *first accountable character of man is a religious character*, this entire body of evidence must be reversed. All men must be conscious of supreme love to God in early life; and conviction of sin and a moral renovation must be confined to those who have lost their religion; while the great body of christians must be supposed to be such without the consciousness of any change. At the same time the history of the world must be found to be a history of the fruits

of piety—idolatry itself being only an aberration of religious affection in the fast friends of God, emulous to please their heavenly Father! It should, moreover, be found written upon the unerring page, 'Every imagination of man's heart is *good* from his youth. The children of men have *not* gone out of the way. There is none who *doth not* understand and seek God, and do good, no, not one. The heart of the sons of men is full of *goodness*, out of which proceed *holy* thoughts, benevolent deeds, chastity, truth, and reverence for God. What, therefore, is man, that he should be *wicked?* or he that is born of a woman, that he should *not* be religious? How *lovely* and pure is man, who drinketh in *righteousness* like water. This is the *approbation*, that *darkness* is come into the world, and men have loved *light* more than darkness, because their deeds are *good.* The whole world lieth in *righteousness.* He [Christ] was in the world and the world *knew* him. O righteous Father, the world hath *known* thee. The friendship of the world is *friendship with God.* If the world hath loved you, ye know that it loved *me* before it loved you. Be ye, therefore, *conformed* to the world, and be ye *not transformed* by any renewing of your mind. My Spirit shall *always* strive with man because *he* is spirit. For that which is born of the *flesh* is *spirit.* Marvel not that I say unto you ye *must not* be born again. For the works of the *flesh* are *love, joy, peace, faith;* and the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, faith. In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth *every* good thing. Jesus Christ came to seek and to save those who were *not* lost;

and he died *not* for his enmies—*not* the just for the unjust, but for his righteous friends. The gospel demands of men *no new character*; and all the doctrines of the Bible imply the early and universal piety of the human family.'

All the inferences from the doctrine as thus proved, refer to man as an adult subject of the government of God.

1. This discussion discloses the nature of depravity in unrenewed man—it consists in the want of love to God, and loving the creature more than God; in covetousness, which is idolatry, having other gods before him.

2. The depravity of adult man is voluntary, as opposed to a coercive necessity of sinful choice.

3. It is positive. Not merely the want of love to God, but actual transgression against God. Active enmity.

4. It is great, as committed against a being of infinite excellence—a violation of infinite obligation, against the most powerful motives in the most aggravating circumstances, and with unparalleled obstinacy of determination.

5. The depravity of man implied in the absence of religion is entire—fallen adult man is totally depraved.

6. It illustrates the nature and necessity of regeneration, as being the commencement of holy love to God in the soul; its absence, death in sin; its presence, by the power of the Spirit, a resurrection from the dead. It is a change perceptible by its effects, and instantaneous in its commencement. There is a mo-

Sermon, where written: circumstances which occasioned it.

ment when, he who loved the world more than God, gives it up, and gives his heart to God—a time when the METANOIA comes to pass.

This is my Pelagian sermon. A sermon on total adult depravity, and its nature as voluntary, consisting in enmity to God, selfishness, pride, covetousness, idolatry, impenitence, and unbelief.

The only alledged evidence of its Pelagianism is contained in what is said about the voluntariness of actual sin in adult man, as opposed to a *supposed created instinct*, or the *direct efficiency of God*, producing actual sin by an irresistible and fatal necessity; But from the text, subject, argument, and inferences of the discourse, it is undeniable that it has reference only to actual sin and total depravity, and has no direct reference to original sin at all. It was written in Connecticut, anterior to the controversies which now agitate the church. It was demanded to encounter and resist the most specious Pelagian argument against the total depravity of man, which I have ever seen. It was deduced from the various noble and amiable traits of human constitution and conduct which survive the fall, and are always urged as matter of fact exceptions to the doctrine of total depravity. Such as taste and admiration of moral fitness; approbation of truth and justice; constitutional kindness and sympathy, and compassion; the natural affections, which unite the family in all their tenderness and power; the amiable constitutional temperaments which survive the fall; honor and honesty in dealings, and liberality, as opposed to covetous-

ness and miserly meanness; correct moralty; power of conscience; public spirit; patriotism; great usefulness, accompanied by a copious retinue of good works. The argument against total depravity was written, and read, and commented on with great ability, and in a manner which compelled me to provide the antidote. With an especial view, then, to meet and refute these Pelagian matter of fact exceptions, to the doctrine of total adult depravity, I constructed the sermon which is now adduced in evidence against me, on the subject of original sin. I began with the position that unrenewed men have no true religion, because that was a point conceded; and having established it, as I believed, I proceeded to draw the inferences which, as I supposed, cut up by the roots these Pelagian virtues as having any *claim* to be considered valid exceptions to the doctrine of total depravity; leaving in its full force the evidence that in adult man there dwelleth no good thing, and that every imagination of his heart is evil only continually. Now, that this sermon, written on purpose to put down the Pelagian exceptions to total depravity, should be, years after, in another and distant department of the church, quoted and admitted as proof of my Pelagianism, would be an anomaly of mental obliquity and injustice, which I am sure cannot find a place in the judicatures of the Presbyterian church. Even had it contained in the ardor of argument expressions not sufficiently guarded, and which by possibility might be interpreted to mean heresy, no court, in the unbiased exercise of Christian candor, would permit them to be turned aside from the

Not the object of the sermon to prove the doctrine of original sin.

main design and governing argument of the discourse. Much less where, though it was not the object of the sermon to establish the doctrine of original sin, it does so by proving two of the fundamental doctrines always relied on by the orthodox church, and by Edwards in particular, to prove the doctrine of original sin—I mean the doctrine of total depravity and the doctrine of regeneration. One of the main arguments of Edwards to prove original sin, is, the universality and entireness of actual sin: from which he infers that, anterior to actual agency, there is in all men, as a consequence of our federal alliance with Adam, some common cause, ground, or reason of universal and total actual depravity, which he calls 'the influence of a prevailing, effectual tendency in the nature of man,' to actual sin. And thus I prove the doctrine of original sin; incidentally, indeed, but really, by proving the actual, universal, total depravity of man. There must be, and there is, in man, something which is the ground and reason that the will of fallen man does from the beginning act wrong —something anterior to voluntary action. To say that all men sin actually, and entirely, and universally, and for ever, until renewed by the Holy Ghost, and that against the strongest possible motives, merely because they are free agents, and are able to do so; and that there is in their nature as affected by the fall, no cause or reason of the certainty; is absurd. It is to ascribe the most stupendous concurrence of perverted action in all the adult millions of mankind to nothing. The thing to be accounted for is the phe-

nomenon of an entire series of universal actual sin; and to ascribe the universal and entire obliquity of the human will to the simple ability of choosing wrong, is to ascribe the moral obliquity of a lost world to nothing.

This was the point of the controversy in Edwards on the will, against the Arminian theory of self-determination. The free agency claimed by the Arminian was one which excluded not only force and absolute necessity of nature from deciding the will, but denied the existence of any *internal constitution*, or *objective influence of motive*, as connected with our constitutional susceptibilities, in securing the existence or determining the moral qualities of choice.

Edwards affirmed that there must be, and is, anterior to the exercise of free agency, some constitution of the agent and relevancy of motive, as the ground and reason of the certainty of choice, though not a coercive cause; and his antagonists deny that there is *any cause, ground, or reason* of the certainty of choice, holy or unholy, in or out of man, anterior to its existence—assuming the necessity of a perfect indifference of will in all cases immediately anterior to volition, and the actual uncertainty of choice, as affected by any cause or reason anterior to its existence; and the necessity to its freedom and accountability, that in every case it should be the simple, uninfluenced energy of the mind itself. And what Edwards attempts to prove, and does prove, in his treatise on the will and on original sin, is, that to choice of any kind there is in the agent some consti-

tution which is the ground or reason that motives become, not indeed the coercive causes, but the certain occasions of volition; and that, in man, before the fall, there was a constitution, which was the ground and reason of the unperverted exercise of his will and affections in loving and obeying God; and that by the fall a change was affected in the nature of man anterior to voluntary action, which is the cause or reason of the universal certainty of the perversion of the will and affections of fallen man; and that the antecedents of perfect actual holiness and entire actual sin are properly denominated, with reference to those certain results in action, a holy or an unholy nature: only guarding, as our Confession does, alike against the Antinomian fatality of will by *force*, and the Arminian self-determination, without any antecedent constitutional cause, ground, or reason, within or without.

These views, as held by Edwards, and corroborated by our own Confession and the standard writers of our church, comprehend the doctrine which I have always believed and preached; and never have I knowingly and intentionally, at any time expressed a sentiment, verbally or in writing, to the contrary.

The falseness and folly of the common notion of the self-determination of the mind by its own energy of will, without any cause or occasion even, is sufficiently manifest, in its opposition to the possibility of moral government on the part of God, or the possibility of praise or blame on the part of man: for moral government is the government of a lawgiver,

influencing the will and conduct of subjects by the influence of laws, rewards, punishments, and administration. But if nothing may approach the mind in the form of influence, having any tendency to destroy the dignified indifference of the will, or secure the certainty or probability even of volition, then, though self-government might exist, the government of God could not; and nothing but the most perfect anarchy could exist as the accidental, uncaused, and unoccasioned action of millions of independent minds, acting without any cause, ground, or reason. Indeed it would render choice itself impossible, as it supposes a mind without susceptibility or desire of any thing, or one thing more than another, —a condition of mind precluding the possibility of choice, which always implies excited desire, and a prospect of some gratification, and without which man would be less capable of choice than a snail or an oyster: and even if he could choose, without desire, reason, or motive, the offspring of such a nondescript, mental anomaly, would be no more praise or blame worthy, than the motions of a pendulum or the tickings of a watch—uncertain of being till they come into being, and coming without any cause, ground, or reason—bubbles from the bottom of the muddy lake might as well be regarded as accountable and worthy of praise or blame as the volitions of men.

I adopt, therefore, with approbation, the language of Professor Hodge, in his Commentary on Romans.

'Of all the facts ascertained by the history of the world, it would seem to be among the plainest, that

men are born destitute of a disposition to seek their chief good in God, and with a disposition to make self-gratification the great end of their being. Even reason, conscience, natural affection, are less universal characteristics of our fallen race. For there are idiots and moral monsters often to be met with; but for a child of Adam, uninfluenced by the special grace of God, to delight in his Maker, as the portion of his soul, from the first dawn of his moral being, is absolutely without example among all the thousands of millions of men who have inhabited our world. If experience can establish any thing, it establishes the truth of the scriptural declaration, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." It would seem no less plain, that this cannot be the original and *normal* state of man; that human nature is not now what it was when it proceeded from the hand of God. Every thing else which God has made answers the end of its being; but human nature, since the fall, has uniformly worked badly; in no one instance has it spontaneously turned to God as its chief good. It cannot be believed that God thus made man; that there has been no perversion of his faculties; no loss of some original and guiding disposition or tendency of his mind. It cannot be credited that men are now what Adam was, when he first opened his eyes on the wonders of creation and the glories of God. Reason, scripture, and experience, therefore, all concur in support of the common doctrine of the Christian world, that the race fell in Adam, lost their original rectitude, and became prone to evil as the sparks to fly upward.'

Original sin implied in the sermon on native character of man.

But in addition to this argumentative implication of original sin, I do, in the very passage claimed to deny it, expressly allude to and recognize its existence, as a reality, only limiting its action as Edwards and our Confession do, as not forcing the will, or by any absolute necessity of nature, determining it to evil. I say:

'Whatever effect, therefore, the fall of man may have had on his race, it has not had the effect to render it impossible for man to love God religiously; and whatever may be the early constitution of man, there is nothing in it, and nothing withheld from it which renders [actual] disobedience unavoidable, and [actual] obedience impossible.'

Finally, the language of the paragraph, interpreted by the laws of just exposition, does not teach or imply a denial of the doctrine of original sin.

I have already shown that my sermon on the native character of man, was not designed to have any reference to original sin; that it spake only of the present, actual condition of adult mind; and that the question how a man came into such a state, was not so much as touched; that I was teaching the existence of total depravity against a wily and practised antagonist, with the sole view of cutting up his false Pelagian positions, and proving total depravity and the necessity of regeneration.

To comprehend fully the import of my language, it must be understood that there were two philosophical theories in respect to the cause of adult actual depravity, the one holding it to be a *moral instinct*,

a created faculty of the soul, as really as any other *faculty* which controlled the will according to its moral nature, as the helm governs the ship, and upon which the will could no more act, than the ship can act on the helm. The other a philosophy which discards this instinctive, involuntary moral taste, and substitutes the *direct efficiency of God*, for the *creation* of all exercises and acts of choice, *good* and *bad*.

These philosophical theories were prevalent long before this controversy arose. The question concerning original sin, was not discussed in my congregation; touching that question, all was as quiet as the sleep of infancy. The question was as to the voluntariness of the depravity of adult man. Keep this in remembrance, and then the import of the sermon cannot be misunderstood. After proving that the depravity of man is very great, I proceed to say that it is voluntary; and this doctrine I advance in opposition to the philosophy which represents man's *actual sin*, *his actual, total depravity*, as being the *necessary, coercive result of a moral instinct, or of divine efficiency*. The question was, whether the selfishness and enmity against God, and worldliness and pride, which obstructed evangelical obedience, in adult man, and made regeneration by the Spirit indispensable, was a state of mind produced and continued by a coercive necessity; and, in accordance with the Bible and the Confession of Faith, and the whole orthodox church, I say—no!—but, 'that God has endued the will of fallen man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor by

"All actual sin is voluntary—Dr. Green.

any absolute necessity of nature determined to good or evil.' It is this nature of adult man, in a state of personal accountability, and active depravity that I am speaking of, as the subject and whole argument of the sermon show, in every sentence and word of the page quoted; and it is of this total, actual depravity of man, which makes regeneration by the Spirit necessary, that I say it cannot be the product of '*an unavoidable necessity;*' and it is of actual holiness and sin that I am speaking, when I say, that to a holy or a sinful nature, perception, understanding, conscience, and choice are indispensable. And is this heresy? Does any one believe that personal accountability, and actual sin, and holiness, can exist without perception, understanding, conscience, and choice; and that the Bible and the Confession of Faith teach it?

Dr. Green says, 'the parties in this controversy are agreed that all actual sin is voluntary, and therefore criminal and inexcusable.'—*Ch. Adv.* 1831, p. 348.

Social, representative liability, and a just desert of punishment in that sense, is a possibility and a reality; but a social liability, and personal demerit, are quite different things; and if it shall be made to appear that the Bible and the Confession do teach the possibility of personal actual sin, without the existence of the faculties of perception, understanding, conscience, and choice, it will, as I believe, be regarded by the whole church of God as a new discovery.

I call this actual depravity of man native, in accord-

ance with the language of the Bible and the most approved theological writers, to indicate its universality, as what all men come to by nature, i. e. by the operation and influence of that change produced in the nature of man by the fall—to mark its positiveness, as including actual enmity, selfishness, pride, and idolatry, instead of a mere want of conformity to the law of God—and especially to designate its permanence as compared to successive acts of choice, and especially its fearful immutability to all finite power. The scriptures speak of the permanence and immutability of man's actual depravity—as a *heart* full of madness and of evil—fully set to do evil; and Turretin calls it a 'voluntary and culpable habit of will;' and Edwards says: 'By a general and habitual moral inability, I mean an inability in the heart to all exercises or acts of will of that nature or kind, through *a fixed and habitual inclination*, or an habitual or stated defect, or want of a certain kind of inclination.'

Now, not only has all I have said on the page objected to, a reference to the actual sin of adult man, as the ground of the necessity of regeneration, but it is all so guarded and tied down, and related to the subject of actual sin, that it can by no possibility be torn away from it, and attached to the subject of original sin. For, in the very statements I make about the the voluntary nature of which I am speaking, I allude to the fall and original sin, and admit and include its existence among the causes which fortify adult man against submission to God, as I have more fully done

in my exposition of the moral inability of man in this discussion, only making the reservation which the Confession makes—that original sin does not force the will to actual sin, nor by any absolute necessity of nature, determine it to evil so as that God is the author of sin, or violence offered to the will of the creatures; or the liberty or contingency of second causes (the power of choosing life or death) taken away, but is rather established.

The declarations, that there is a time when actual sin commences, and that the first sin is voluntary, uncoerced, inexcusable, and might have been and ought to have been avoided as really as any of the actual sins that followed it, will not I apprehend alarm any large proportion of the church. The distinction between original and actual sin has been universal in the orthodox church, and the more common opinion, as I suppose, has always been that actual sin does not commence from the womb, and that the time when social liability is succeeded by personal demerit for actual transgression, is not and cannot be exactly known to any but the eye of God. What I have asserted is, that whenever personal accountability does commence, the sinner is a free agent, and inexcusable for his first as really as for any other actual sin.

I perceive that what I wrote ten years ago, with my eye wholly on the subject of man's nature as an actual sinner and totally depraved, read by a person at the present time, in a state of alarm and excitement about the Pelagian heresy, on the subject of original sin, might, if not read with great care and attention,

be liable to be misunderstood, as denying that depravity of nature which is peculiar to original sin: but the moment the laws of candid, correct interpretation, are applied, the possibility of such an interpretation is precluded, and the true limit, meaning and intent of my language is made apparent. For it cannot be that a sermon professedly against the Pelagian notions of virtue and good works in man, as exceptions to the doctrine of total depravity, and containing a formal and labored argument in defence of that doctrine, and inferring from it the necessity of regeneration, and an anti-Pelagian instantaneous regeneration by the special influence of the Holy Spirit, should be found intentionally teaching the very doctrine it set out to oppose, and opposing the very doctrine it was constructed to establish.

Were any evidence beside the internal evidence of the discourse itself necessary, it is contained in a sermon written about the same time that this sermon on Native Character was written, and written professedly on original sin. The following are my comments on several passages in Romans v.

'For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners.' Adam was created holy and placed in a state of probation—the consequences of which were to extend not only to himself, but to his posterity. If he continued holy, they would be born holy. If he became a sinner, his children would be born depraved. In the hour of temptation he fell and LOST FOR A WORLD, the inheritance of life, and entailed upon it the sad inheritance of depravity and wo.

'For if by ONE man's offence death reigned by one,' how did death reign by ONE man's offence, if the depravity of his race was not the consequence of his sin? If his posterity are born holy, (innocent,) and become sinners by their own act, uninfluenced by what Adam did, then death enters the world not by one man, but by every man.

'And so death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.' Passed upon infants possessing a depraved nature, though they had not committed actual sin. They, as well as adults, are subjected to pain and death. They, as really as adults, need a Savior, and a change of heart by the Holy Ghost, to fit them for heaven.

'The judgment was by one man to condemnation,' i. e. the sin of one man, and one single act of sin subjected his posterity to a depraved nature as the consequence.

I give these quotations to show, that though when writing on the total actual depravity of man, my expressions may have misled some to understand me as denying original sin; I did, at the same period, when writing professedly on that subject—recognize the doctrine fully and strongly, and at the time was never, to my knowledge, misunderstood.

What follows, is from my Lecture on the Fall and its Consequences, delivered in Boston and Cincinnati.

'By the appointment of God, the character and destiny of man was inseparably connected with the conduct of Adam. He was in such a sense the federal head and representative of his posterity—that

according to God's appointment called a covenant, had Adam continued holy, his posterity would have continued holy, as his disobedience has drawn after it the defection of the race. The universal bias of man to evil is denominated a depraved nature, on account of its universal tendencies to actual sin.'

Here I might stop; for I am under no obligation to volunteer statements of my opinions, in respect to the subjects on which I am accused. My errors are to be shown by evidence; and I say that, in this case, the evidence has utterly failed; and I might, therefore, repel the charge of heresy, as not established. But I have no secrets on this subject, nor in respect to any of the religious opinions which I hold. At my time of life, and especially under the circumstances in which I am placed, both as pastor of a flock, and an instructer of the rising ministry of the church, I have no right to any secret opinions. I scorn concealment, and therefore I will declare with all openness, the things which I do believe. The presbytery shall not *suspect* me of being a heretic. If I am a heretic, they shall *know* it. You shall have in respect to my views of original sin, the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

1. As to the federal or representative character of Adam, and the covenant with him and his posterity. I have, through my whole public life, believed and taught, that the constitution and character of his entire posterity, as perverted or unperverted, depended on his obedience or defection; and that he was in this respect, and by God's appointment, constitutionally

the covenant head and representative of his race. And that, in this view, all mankind descending from him, by ordinary generation, sinned *in him*, and fell with him in his first transgression: that is, their character and destiny were decided by his deed.

For a more ample expression of my views, I submit the remarks of Dr. Bishop, President of the Miami University, on the subject of *Social Liabilities*, the best name that was ever devised for the idea. A name which, I hope, we shall all remember and fix in our minds, as it is calculated to avoid much error which has arisen from the use of other phraseology. In respect to the book from which I am about to quote, I heartily thank that great and good man, for having condensed so much truth into so small a compass; and I do believe that the simple substitution of this technic, 'social liability,' would carry us all out of the swamp together. For we in fact think, and ought to speak, the same thing. After illustrating the social liabilities of men, for the conduct of others in the family, in commercial relations, and as parts of a nation, and as social and moral beings affected by the nameless influences of the christian example and deeds of our fellow-men, he proceeds to say:

'1. That every man is by his very nature, intimately connected, in a great variety of ways, with thousands of his fellow-men, whom he has never seen; and that the conduct and the character of a single individual may have an extensive and a lasting influence upon millions of his fellow-men, though far removed from him, both as to time and place.

Social liabilities classed under two general heads.

'2. That these liabilities may be classed under two general heads, viz:—Natural and Positive. The son inherits a diseased or a healthy body, and, in many cases, also an intellectual or moral character; and generation after generation sustains the character of their ancestors, by what may be called a natural influence. Like produces and continues like. But in commercial and political transactions, lasting and important liabilities are created and continued by positive arrangements.

'3. That, in all cases of social liabilities, individual and representative responsibility, are always kept distinct. Nor is it, in the most of cases, a very difficult thing to have a clear and distinct conception of these two distinct responsibilities.

'Every citizen of these United States, who thinks at all, must feel that himself and his children, and his children's children, are deeply interested in the conduct and character of the president of the United States, for the time being. An able and virtuous president, with an able and wise and faithful cabinet, must be a great blessing to the millions, both the born and unborn, on both sides of the Atlantic. And, on the other hand, a weak and a wicked president, and cabinet, must be the occasion of inconceivable inconveniences, and real privations and sufferings, to countless millions, both of the present and succeeding generations. But yet no man ever thought of attributing to himself, or to his children, the personal wisdom, or intellectual ability, or inflexible integrity, which has marked the character of any distinguished

Executive of U. S. Terms guilty and innocent used differently.

executive officer; nor, on the other hand, has he ever thought of being charged individually, or of having his children charged individually, with the weakness, or wickedness of a bad executive officer. He, and his children, and his neighbors, and their children, feel and acknowledge, that they are personally and deeply involved in the consequences of the official acts of these men, whether these consequences are of a beneficial or a hurtful tendency; but, at the same time, individual and personal merit and demerit, and individual and personal responsibility, are clearly understood, and never, for a moment, *merged in social and representative transactions.*

'From a view of the above facts it follows—

'4. That the terms *guilty* and *innocent*, must with every thinking man, be used in a *different sense*, when they are applied to responsibilities incurred by the *conduct of another*, *from that in which they are used when they are applied to personal conduct.* In the former application, *guilty* can only mean liability to suffer *punishment*, and *innocent* to be not liable. But in the latter application, they mean, having violated, or having not violated, some moral or positive commandment. In the one case, the terms apply to a personal act, and to personal character; but in the other, they only mark the *nature and the consequences of a certain act or acts, as these consequences are felt by another person.*

'5. In every case of social liability, *unity* is recognized. The individuals concerned may be millions, or only two, and they may be in every other respect

and bearing, distinct and separate; but in the particular case in which liability applies, they are in law, only *one moral person.*

'The father and son, the ancestor, and the descendant, have only one common nature, or *one* common right. In commercial transactions, the company is *one*, though composed of many individuals; and the nation, acting by the constituted authorities, with all her other varieties, and differences, while a nation, continues *one* and indivisible.'

And here let me say, that this principle is recognized in the relation of Adam to his posterity, and of theirs to him, so that the effects in penal evil, while they blasted him, blasted them also.

There is, in my apprehension, something of this constitutional social liability pervading the whole moral universe, and inseparable from the nature of mind and moral government, and the effects of temptation, character, and example. It is probable, that rational beings, constituted as they are, cannot be brought together, so that the action of one shall not in some degree affect the character of others. Whether it was a positive appointment merely, or whether it was an inevitable effect flowing from the nature of things, or which is more probable, the united result of both; such was the constitution established by God, between Adam and his seed; so that if Adam should stand, all his children would retain their integrity; but if he should fall, they would fall with him. And we may well apply to the fall of our first parents the

affecting language of Mark Anthony over Cæsar's body:

> 'O what a fall was there my countrymen!
> Then you, and I, and all of us fell down.'

The constitution was equally certain both ways; and in this respect it was just and equal. If, then, it be asked, whether I hold that Adam was the federal head of his posterity? I answer, certainly he was; because that which he did, decided what was to be the character and conduct of all his posterity. If the inquiry is made, whether I admit the imputation of Adam's sin? If imputation be understood to mean, that Adam's posterity were present in him, and thus sinned in him, I answer, No; and Dr. Wilson answers, No. And here we are agreed. For if mankind were present in Adam, and in that sense sinned in him, who does not see that their sin was *actual*, not original? *personal*, and not derived, or transmitted, or propagated?

Again, if by original sin be meant, that Adam's personal qualities were transferred to his posterity, (a theory which like the other had once its day,) I reply, that I do not and cannot believe any such thing; neither does Dr. Wilson believe it. And here let me say, that all the alarm and all the odium which has been excited in relation to the divines of New England, have arisen from two things: their opposition to the notion of personal identity with Adam; and their denial of the transfer of his moral qualities to his posterity. But neither of these things is involved in the charges preferred against me by Dr. Wilson.

True doctrine of original sin. Meaning of the word guilt.

What, then, is the true doctrine of original sin? It is the obnoxiousness of Adam's posterity to the penal consequences of his transgression; to all that came in that stream of evils which his offence let in upon the world. The same change of constitution, of nature and character, which was wrought in him by his transgression, appears in them through all their generations. This liability, this exposedness to punishment is in the Confession called 'Guilt;' but that word, as then used, conveyed theologically, a different meaning from what is now usually attached to the term. By guilt, we now understand the desert of punishment for personal sin; but this is not the sense of the word in the Confession of Faith; there it means liability to penal evil in consequence of Adam's sin. This was another of the spots where I stumbled once at the language of the Confession. I could not consent to the punishment in my person of the guilt of Adam's sin as if it were my own. To that I do not now consent. That, I now believe, the Confession of Faith does not teach; but I cordially receive it as teaching that Adam was our representative, and that on his breaking God's righteous covenant with him as such, the curse, which fell like a thunder bolt and struck the offender, struck with him all his posterity, struck all the animal world, struck the ground on which he stood, and the whole world in which he dwelt.

'Earth felt the wound.'

This social liability is illustrated in the fall of angels. The influence of one master spirit drew away

(as it would seem from some passages in Scripture) one third part of the heavenly host. Let sedition and revolt take place in a nation; who gets it up? does the entire mass of the nation rise spontaneously and simultaneously by one common impulse? No. Some leading mind first fires the train; and though one half the population may ultimately perish under the reaction of the government, their death is to be traced up to one master spirit as the mover and promoter of the whole commotion. Let us never forget the maxim—it is worthy to be written in letters of gold, 'individual and representative responsibility are always to be kept distinct.' I adopt this language of Dr. Bishop, and lay it in as an exposition of my own views, with respect to the character of Adam, to guilt as imputed, and to punishment as the consequence of our social relations. I have always adopted the language of Edwards, as correctly stating the truth on this subject.

'In consequence of Adam's sin, all mankind do constantly, in all ages, without fail in any one instance, run into the moral evil, which is, in effect, their own utter and eternal perdition, and a total privation of God's favor, and suffering of his vengeance and wrath.'

So that the real doctrine is not that Adam's posterity were one in personal identity, or personally guilty, by a transfer of sinful moral qualities or actions; but simply that a part of the curse of the law fell on the posterity of Adam, as really as on himself; and the punishment was the loss of original righteousness,

which would have been their inheritance had Adam obeyed, and that change of the constitution of human nature, from which results the certainty of entire actual sin. Now what the particular change was, which furnished the ground of this absolute certainty, that all mankind would run into sin, I do not profess to understand. Paul, in the fifth chapter to the Romans, states the facts of the case, in the imputation of a nature spoiled, and under such an effectual bias, that as soon as the mind acts, it acts wrong. This is all that I can say touching original sin. All is confusion and darkness beyond this. I have no light and pretend to no knowledge. And surely there is no heresy in ignorance. I always believed in original sin, and that Adam was the federal head of his posterity, and although I have not used generally that particular phrase, I believe as much in the truth it is intended to convey, as any man in the church. I believe that God made a covenant with Adam; that the effects of his fall reached all his posterity and produced in them such a change, that the human mind which before willed right, thence forward was sure to will wrong; that in consequence of the change which took place in Adam himself, the bias to holiness, which, had Adam stood, would have been the blessed inheritance of all his children, was utterly lost, so that they now inherit a corrupt nature. I have always called it so. I have expressly denominated it a depraved nature. I believe they inherit this not as actual personal sin—that it comes upon them, not as a punishment of their personal sin, but as a political evil would come upon the

people of the United States from the evil conduct of their chief magistrate. In a word, that we share the character of our progenitor, and all the deplorable effects of his transgression.

The following additional quotations will show that these views are the received doctrines of the church:

'Turretin,' as quoted by Hodge on Romans, '(*Theol. Elench. Quaest.* IX. p. 678,) says: "Imputation is either of something foreign to us, or of something properly our own. Sometimes that is imputed to us which is personally ours; in which sense God imputes to sinners their transgressions. Sometimes that is imputed which is without us, and not performed by ourselves; thus the righteousness of Christ is said to be imputed to us, and our sins are imputed to him, although he has neither sin in himself, nor we righteousness. Here we speak of the latter kind of imputation, not of the former, because we are treating of a sin committed by Adam, not by us." The ground of this imputation is the union between Adam and his posterity. This union is not a mysterious identity of person, but, 1. "Natural, as he is the father, and we are the children. 2. Political and forensic, as he was the representative head and chief of the whole human race. The foundation, therefore, of imputation is not only the natural connection which exists between us and Adam, since, in that case, all his sins might be imputed to us, but mainly the moral and federal, in virtue of which God entered into covenant with him as our head." Again, "We are constituted sinners in Adam in the same way in which we are constituted righteous in Christ."'

'Tuckney (*Praelectiones*, p. 234:) "We are counted righteous through Christ in the same manner that we are counted guilty through Adam. The latter is by imputation, therefore, also the former." "We are not so foolish or blasphemous as to say, or even to think, that the imputed righteousness of Christ makes us formally and subjectively righteous."'

'Owen (in his work on Justification, p. 236,) says: "Things which are not our own originally, inherently, may yet be imputed to us, ex justitia, by the rule of righteousness. And this may be done upon a double relation unto those whose they are, 1. Federal. 2. Natural. Things done by one may be imputed unto others, propter relationem foederalem, because of a covenant relation between them. So the sin of Adam was imputed to all his posterity. And the ground hereof is, that we stood in the same covenant with him who was our head and representative." On p. 242, he says, "This imputation (of Christ's righteousness) is not the transmission or transfusion of the righteousness of another into them which are to be justified, that they should become perfectly and inherently righteous thereby. For it is impossible that the righteousness of one should be transfused into another, to become his subjectively and inherently." Again, p. 307: "As we are made guilty by Adam's actual sin, which is not inherent in us, but only imputed to us; so are we made righteous by the righteousness of Christ, which is not inherent in us, but only imputed to us." On page 468, he says: "Nothing is intended by the imputation of sin unto

any, but the rendering them justly obnoxious unto the punishment due unto that sin. As the not imputing of sin is the freeing of men from being subject or liable to punishment." It is one of his standing declarations, "To be *alienae culpae reus*, (i. e, to be guilty of another's crime) MAKES NO MAN A SINNER." '

'Knapp (in his lectures on theology, sect. 76) says, in stating what the doctrine of imputation is, "God's imputing the sin of our first parents to their descendants amounts to this: God punishes the descendants on account of the sin of their first parents." This he gives as a mere historical statement of the nature of the doctrine, and the form in which its advocates maintained it.'

'Zachariae (*Bib. Theologie*, Vol. II. p. 394, says: "If God allows the punishment which Adam incurred to come on all his descendants, he imputes his sin to them all. And in this sense Paul maintains that the sin of Adam is imputed to all, because the punishment of the one offence of Adam has come upon all." '

'Bretschneider, when stating the doctrine of the reformers, as presented in the various creeds published under their authority, says, that they regarded justification, which includes the idea of imputation, as a forensic or judicial act of God, by which the relation of man to God, and not the man himself was changed. And imputation of righteousness they described as "That judgment of God, according to which he treats us as though we had not sinned but had fulfilled the law, or as though the righteousness of Christ was ours." This view of justification they

constantly maintained in opposition to the Papists, who regarded it as a moral change consisting in what they called the infusion of righteousness.'

I shall now show that this is the view entertained by the professors of the Princeton Seminary.

'What we deny, therefore, is, first, that this doctrine involves any mysterious union with Adam, any confusion of our identity with his, so that his act was properly and personally our act; and secondly, that the moral turpitude of that sin was transferred from him to us; we deny the possibility of any such transfer. These are the two ideas which the Spectator and others consider as necessarily involved in the doctrine of imputation, and for rejecting which they represent us as having abandoned the old doctrine on the subject.'

'The words *guilt* and *punishment* are those particularly referred to. The former we had defined to be liability or exposedness to punishment. We did not mean to say that the word never included the idea of moral turpitude or criminality. We were speaking of its theological usage. It is very possible that a word may have one sense in common life, and another somewhat modified in particular sciences.'

'Punishment according to our views, is an evil inflicted on a person, in the execution of a judicial sentence, on account of sin. That the word is used in this sense, for evils thus inflicted on one person for the offence of another, cannot be denied. It would be easy to fill a volume with examples of this usage.' *Biblical Repertory*, pp. 346, 440, 441.

Hodge on Romans: 'The doctrine of imputation is clearly taught in this passage. This doctrine does not include the idea of a mysterious identity of Adam and his race; nor that of a transfer of the moral turpitude of his sin to his descendants. It does not teach that his offence was personally or properly the sin of all men, or that his act was, in any mysterious sense, the act of his posterity. Neither does it imply, in reference to the righteousness of Christ, that his righteousness becomes personally and inherently ours, or that his moral excellence is in any way transferred from him to believers. The sin of Adam, therefore, is no ground to us of remorse; and the righteousness of Christ is no ground of self-complacency in those to whom it is imputed. This doctrine merely teaches, that in virtue of the union, representative and natural, between Adam and his posterity, his sin is the ground of their condemnation, that is, of their subjection to penal evils; and that in virtue of the union between Christ and his people, his righteousness is the ground of their justification.' p. 221.

'Whatever evil the scriptures represent as coming upon us on account of Adam, they regard as penal; they call it death, which is the general term by which any penal evil is expressed.

'It is not however the doctrine of the scriptures, nor of the reformed churches, nor of our standards, that the corruption of nature of which they speak, is any depravation of the soul, or an essential attribute, or the infusion of any positive evil. "Original sin," as the confessions of the reformers maintain, "is not

the substance of man, neither his soul nor body; nor is it any thing infused into his nature by Satan, as poison is mixed with wine; it is not an essential attribute, but an accident, i. e. something which does not exist of itself, an incidental quality, &c." Bretschneider, Vol. II. p. 30. These confessions teach that original righteousness, as a punishment of Adam's sin, was lost, *and by that defect* the tendency to sin, or corrupt disposition, or corruption of nature, is occasioned. Though they speak of original sin as being, first, negative, i. e. the loss of righteousness; and, secondly, positive, or corruption of nature; yet by the latter, they state, is to be understood, not the infusion of any thing in *itself sinful*, but an actual tendency or disposition to evil resulting from the loss of righteousness.' pp. 229, 230.

'We derive from Adam a nature destitute of any native tendency to the love and service of God; and since the soul, from its nature, is filled, as it were, with susceptibilities; dispositions, or tendencies to certain modes of acting, or to objects out of itself, if destitute of the governing tendency or disposition to holiness and God, it has, of course, a tendency to self-gratification and sin.' p. 231.

I now refer to a judicial decision of the General Assembly, in the case of Mr. Balch.

'The transferring of personal sin or righteousness has never been held by Calvinistic divines, nor by any person in our church as far as is known to us. But, with regard to his (Mr. B.'s) doctrine of original sin, it is to be observed, that he is erroneous in representing personal corruption as not derived from

Adam; making Adam's sin to be imputed to his posterity in consequence of a corrupt nature *already possessed*, and derived from, we know not what; thus in effect setting aside the idea of Adam's being the federal head or representative of his descendants, and the whole doctrine of the covenant of works.'—*Assembly's Digest*, p. 130.

My next authority is Dr. Wilson himself.

'Let us guard here against some mistakes. The doctrine of a union of representation does not involve in it the idea of personal identity. It does not mean that Adam and his posterity are the same identical persons. It does not mean that his act was properly and personally their act. Nor does it mean that the moral turpitude of Adam's sin was transferred to his descendants. The transfer of moral character makes no part of the doctrine of imputation.'

And now, according to the just and true intent of the terms, as indicated by the established laws of exposition, and confirmed by the standard writers of our church, acquiesced in and corroborated by her highest judicature, I believe and teach, that 'Adam, being the root of all mankind, the guilt of his sin was imputed, and the same death in sin, and corrupted nature conveyed to all his posterity, descending from him by ordinary generation:' that from 'this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions; and that the covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself but for his posterity, all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned

in him and fell with him in his first transgression;' that 'the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called original sin, together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it; and that by the fall of our first parents 'all mankind lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made *liable* to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever.'

I believe also, and always have believed and taught, that infants are the subjects of original sin, and as distinguished from actual sin, consisting in the 'influence of a prevailing effectual tendency in their nature' to actual sin; and that on account of this prevalent tendency, it is, in the Bible, the Confession, and the common language of men, justly denominated a depraved nature; and that being thus depraved, and considered in their social liabilities as one with Adam, they no more than adults could be saved without an atonement and the special influence of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, to overcome and remove this bias to evil of original corruption, and secure the unperverted exercise of their voluntary powers in spiritual obedience, and ultimately be prepared for perfect conformity to the will of God in heaven. I scarce ever attended the funeral of an infant without an express recognition of these views upon infant depravity, and the atonement and regeneration as the only ground of hope that they are saved.

I close this discussion in respect to original sin,

Epitome of the author's views on original sin.

with the following concise epitome of my own views, which, as I understand and believe, have been and are the received doctrines of the church of God, in every age:

1. Original sin is the effect of Adam's sin upon the constitution of his race, in consequence of his being their federal head and representative by a divine appointment or covenant.

2. It does not consist in the sinfulness of matter, according to the Gnostics, or in the sinfulness of the soul's essence, according to the Manicheans: but

3. It consists in the perversion of those constitutional powers and susceptibilities, which in Adam before the fall eventuated in actual and perfect obedience, and which in their perverted condition by the fall, eventuate in actual and total depravity.

4. It is in its nature involuntary; and yet, though certain and universal in its influence to pervert the will and affections, does neither force the will, nor by an absolute necessity of nature determine it to evil, or impair obligation, or excuse actual sin. It descends from Adam, by natural generation, through all the race.

It is a bias or tendency of nature to actual sin, which baffles all motives and all influence short of Omnipotence, to prevent its eventuation in total, actual depravity, or to restore the perverted will and affections to holy obedience.

It is this bias to evil, the effect of the fall, which, though impaired by regeneration, is not annihilated, but remains in the regenerate, which, combined with

the habits of actual sin, constitutes the law in the members warring against the law of the mind, preventing, until the soul at death is made meet for heaven, the unbiased and unperverted exercise of the will and affections, in perfect accordance with the moral law.

It is denominated by Edwards, and justly, an exceedingly evil and depraved nature, as being in all its tendencies and all its actual results, adverse to the law; and on the ground of our alliance with Adam, our federal head, and our social liability, deserves God's wrath and curse, in all that comes to pass in perverted constitution, choice and character, including the evils of the life that now is, death itself, and the pains of hell forever.

Such, on the subject of original sin, are the views which I have always held and taught since I have been in the ministry; nor has any evidence been produced, that I have ever at any time believed or taught the contrary. The entire evidence relied on, is a misapprehension and misinterpretation of the passage adduced from my sermon; and there is now no evidence, not a syllable of evidence, to sustain the charge. Should it be inquired, why I did not explain my views on original sin, and the misconceptions of my discourse, to Dr. Wilson, as I have now done, and save ourselves and the church the affliction and annoyance of such a controversy; I answer, that I often assured Dr. Wilson that he misunderstood my views and communications on that subject, and requested him, respectfully and earnestly, three or four times, to permit me to make the requisite explanations, and was as often refused.

TOTAL DEPRAVITY.

On this subject my doctrine, and the evidence relied on for its support, are sufficiently manifest in the epitome which I have given of my sermon on the Native Character of Man.

It includes the absence of all holiness—the want of conformity unto, and the actual transgression of, the law of God.

It is universal—there being not a mere man of all the millions of Adam's posterity that hath lived and not sinned.

It is entire—every imagination of the thoughts of the heart being evil only—there being none that do good, no not one.

It is positive—as including the actual preference of the creature to the Creator, which is enmity against God.

It is voluntary—though occasioned by original sin, the will is not forced, nor by any necessity determined to good or evil. But though voluntary, with the possibility of turning to God, it is spontaneously immutable to any motive, but the word of God made effectual by his Spirit.

It was this view of total depravity excluding all

Total depravity fully taught and preached by the author.

native virtue from the heart, motives, words, and deeds of man, which produced the reaction that occasioned the sermon on the native character of man.

I taught with the Confession, that 'works done by unregenerate men, although, for the matter of them, they may be things which God commands, and of good use both to themselves and others; yet because they proceed not from a heart purified by faith; nor are done in a right manner, according to the word; nor to a right end, the glory of God; they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God, or make a man meet to receive grace from God. And yet their neglect of them is more sinful, and displeasing unto God.'

It is a doctrine which, in various forms I have explained, and proved, and preached, and applied, more than any other, as being especially the one by which the commandment comes and sin revives.

REGENERATION—OR EFFECTUAL CALLING.

In respect to this doctrine I am not apprised, precisely, what is the form of error which I am supposed to hold. But if it be the Pelagian, as I conclude from the analogy of my supposed heresy, on the subject of original sin, it must be that I deny that regeneration is a radical change of character, and only an improvement of the good principles of our nature by moral culture. That it is in any special sense a work of God, and only as he has provided the instruction and motives which, by their natural influence and human endeavor, produce religion—and that, of course, regeneration is a gradual and not an instantaneous change.

To all such apprehensions I reply, that nothing can be more contrary to the entire course of my faith and teaching on the subject, as all the churches know which have been successively under my pastoral care, and all men who have attended my ministry with sufficient constancy, to receive the image and body of my preaching. There is no subject beside the kindred one of total depravity, which I have dwelt upon with such copiousness of explanation,

proofs, and earnest application—line upon line—in season and out of season, as on the subject of regeneration—insomuch, that my stated hearers would as soon think of suspecting me of atheism as of Pelagianism, on the subject of regeneration.

That I have not been fully understood on a single point, I perceive; but that I shall be understood, and understood as teaching the doctrine in accordance with the Bible, and the Confession, and the generally received opinion of the orthodox church, I have a comfortable hope.

I am aware that a man's simple professions, when under suspicion of heresy, are but a poor defence against the amplifications of imagination and fear, especially when divisions, and tumults, and swellings exist—there may be for a season little to choose between being suspected of heresy, and being guilty of it. Instead, therefore, of making mere declarations of my belief, I shall state and illustrate my views on the several topics belonging to the subject of regeneration, as I have been accustomed to state them in my discourses from the pulpit, and in my lectures to the students under my care. These topics are—

1. The nature;
2. The efficient cause;
3. The effectual means; and
4. The necessity of regeneration.

1. THE NATURE OF REGENERATION.—By this I mean the nature of the change which is produced in the subject by the Spirit of God. This, according to my understanding of the Bible, is correctly disclosed in

the doctrine of effectual calling as taught in the Confession of Faith and Catechisms, as including 'the enlightening of the minds of men spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving a heart of flesh—renewing their wills and determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ—yet so as they come freely, being made willing by his grace—in his accepted time, inviting and drawing them to Jesus Christ by his word and spirit—so as they (although in themselves dead in sin) are hereby made willing and able truly to answer his call, and to accept and embrace the grace offered and conveyed therein;' or as the Shorter Catechism teaches, more concisely and with no less correctness:

'Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered us in the gospel.'

The substance of what is taught by this various phraseology is, that a change is effected in regeneration in respect to man's chief *end*, in turning from the supreme love of self, to the supreme love of God—from gratifying and exalting self, to gratifying and exalting God—a giving up and turning from the world in all its pomp and vanities as the chief good, and returning to God as the chosen portion of the soul—withdrawing the affections from things below, and setting them on things above—ceasing to lay up

our treasure on earth, and laying it up in heaven—and so grieving for and hating our past sins, as that we turn from them all to God, purposing and endeavoring to walk with God in all the ways of new obedience.

This, it will not, I think, be doubted, comprehends correctly the moral change which takes place in regeneration.

THE AUTHOR OR EFFICIENT CAUSE OF REGENERATION IS GOD. By efficient cause I mean that power without which all other influence is vain, and by which means otherwise impotent are made effectual. The power then, which in all cases is the immediate antecedent and effectual cause of regeneration, is the special influence of the Holy Spirit. It is called the Holy Spirit, not by way of any preeminent personal excellence, but as the divine agent to whom is committed the work of commencing and perfecting holiness in the hearts of men.

That God is the efficient cause of regeneration, is plainly taught in the text, and throughout the Bible, in the various forms of metaphor, direct testimony, and multiplied implications. Is moral pollution in the way—'I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean.' Is stupidity and insensibility the impediment to be removed—'I will take away the stony heart and give a heart of flesh.' Is the condition of man represented by the battle field, a capacious valley whitened with bones—it is God who says unto these bones, 'Behold I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live.' Is it the help-

lessness of infancy abandoned in the open field, with no eye to pity or arm to save—it is God who 'passes by and bids us live.' Is it darkness which impedes our salvation—it is 'God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, who shines in our hearts.' Is death the calamity, a resurrection is the remedy—'You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins, and raised us up to sit together in heavenly places in Christ.' Is it the annihilation of spiritual life, regeneration is a new creation—'created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works.' Is it the old man who makes resistance to the claims of God—the regenerated are said to be 'born again, not of blood,' i. e. not by natural descent, 'nor of the will of the flesh,' the striving and efforts of sinners to save themselves, 'nor of the will of man,' the efforts of men to save their fellow men,' but of God; WHOSOEVER LOVETH IS BORN OF GOD.'

THE POWER OF GOD CONCERNED IN REGENERATION IS SUPERNATURAL. It is so, 1. as compared with the power of any created agent, man or angel.

2. IT IS SUPERNATURAL, as above the power of any law of nature, or natural efficacy of truth or motive, in the ordinary operation of cause and effect, natural or moral.

3. IT IS SUPERNATURAL, as distinguished from the stated operations of divine power, which are concerned in upholding all things and guiding them in the stated order of cause and effect, to their results, as earth, and air, and rain, and sunshine produce vegetation, and cause harvests to wave in the field.

4. IT IS SUPERNATURAL, as being an interposition to accomplish unfailingly a change in the will and affections of men, which never takes place without it. And—

5. IT IS SUPERNATURAL, as it is an act of GOD'S ALMIGHTY POWER—as really so as the creation of worlds, or the resurrection of the dead.

The question has been started, whether God is able to regenerate any more than he does. Unquestionably so far as sufficient power is concerned, he is able to subdue all things to himself. The limitation in respect to the application of redemption, is not one of impotency, but a limitation of the unerring wisdom and infinite benevolence of God—the limitation of doing always, and only in the administration of grace that which seemeth good in his sight, and is right and best. The discriminations of his justice and grace are voluntary. So far as his power is concerned, he is as able to subdue the wills of rebels as to control the elements. In his moral kingdom, he is as truly THE LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT, working all things according to the counsel of his will, as he is in the government of the natural universe. He has placed nothing which he has made beyond the reach of his power; and he has made nothing which he cannot and does not govern, according to the counsel of his own will. The power of God in regeneration is represented as among the greatest displays of his omnipotence ever made, or to be made, in the history of the universe. When this fair creation rose fresh in beauty from the hand of God, the morning stars sang together, and all

the sons of God shouted for joy; but sweeter songs will celebrate, and louder shouts attend the consummation of redemption, by the power of God's Spirit; and such brighter glories of God, and higher illustrations of his power, will be manifested to principalities and powers by the church, as will cause the light of his glory in physical creation to go out and be forgotten, as the stars fade and are lost amid the splendors of the sun. It is the united glory of God's power and goodness, in redemption, and not the wonders of physical creation, which inspire and perpetuate for ever around his throne, the voice of praise, as the sound of many waters and mighty thunderings, to Him who loved us, and died for us, and washed us in his blood, and made us kings and priests unto God.

The effect of this divine interposition is instantaneous—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. It must be instantaneous from the nature of the case. If man is an idolater, there must be a time when he gives the idol up for God; if an enemy, there must be a time when he becomes reconciled; if without holy love, there must be a time when it begins to warm the heart.

The graces of the Spirit admit not of a progressive creation—love or enmity, penitence or impenitence, faith or unbelief, are the only positive conditions of the human mind. There is no state between them. There is and can be no such thing as love, or repentance, or faith, half formed, and progressive to a completion.

There are persons, however, of some seriousness,

who seem desirous to approximate to evangelical belief on the subject of regeneration—who admit the necessity of a change in human character, in some degree like that which we have described, only it is not wholly new, but the result of the progressive culture of the human powers by divine aid; and since on both sides, we believe, they say, in the necessity holiness, what difference does it make whether it comes from old principles or new, or whether the work is instantaneous or progressive.

Whatever might be thought beforehand, the difference in experience between a belief in instantaneous or progressive regeneration, is manifest and great. The latter assumes fallacious and dangerous views of human nature, as including some seed of virtue, or principle of light and life, which needs only cultivation to bring it up to the maturity of holiness; is associated also with false views of holiness, as consisting in some nondescript, mystical goodness, which grows imperceptibly under culture, as the harvest rises under rain and sunshine.

It legitimates as virtues, efficacious to save, all those grounds of fallacious hope which I have already named—quelling fear, preventing a sense of sin, and creating hope built upon the sand.

It produces likewise and fosters, and makes obstinate, a self-righteous and self-complacent, self-justifying spirit, while it creates hostility to the fundamental doctrines of the gospel—the entire depravity of man, the necessity of a radical change of character, and acquiescence in the discriminations of divine

justice and mercy, in the punishment or renovation and pardon of sinful men.

And, worst of all, its tendency on communities, is to cause prejudice and virulent hostility not only against the doctrines of the Bible, but against revelation itself, and to produce ultimately scepticism and rank infidelity, and scoffing at the Bible and the work of the Spirit.

THE EFFECTUAL MEANS OF REGENERATION IS THE WORD OF GOD. By effectual means, I understand the means which God employs and renders efficient in producing the change. That he accomplishes the change by his mighty power associated with means, is the unequivocal testimony of the Bible and the Confession of Faith. Chosen to salvation, the Elect of God are, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth whereunto he called them *by the Gospel.*' The Gospel is denominated 'the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation.' 'The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.' 'The word of God is quick and powerful.' 'The seed is the word.' 'Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God;—and this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.' 'Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.' 'Sanctify them through thy truth. Thy word is truth.' 'Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit.' 'They shall be taught of God.' 'I drew them with the cords of love.' 'No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.' 'Every

one, therefore, which hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me.'

This is only a small portion of the phraseology of the Bible which associates God's efficiency with his word, in regeneration. That such instrumentality should, in direct terms, and by every variety of metaphor, be associated with the power of God in regeneration, if in fact no such instrumentality is employed, cannot be assumed without shaking the foundation of all confidence in the teaching of the Bible. Exposition may as well be abandoned; for nothing, in that case, can be taught by language, which theory and imagination might not explain away. We might as well deny that God is the efficient cause, as that truth is the 'effectual means' of regeneration. But there is no necessity for denying either, and no authority for stripping either class of texts of their natural and obvious import, to mean nothing. What would be thought of the expositor who should insist, that because men are begotten again by the *word*, therefore the *power* of God is not concerned in regeneration, and that it is all a matter of moral suasion and human endeavor? But why should the efficiency of God defraud the word of its alledged instrumentality, or the instrumentality of the word exclude the power of God? Is the union of both impossible? It cannot be impossible, because, unquestionably, in the government of the natural world, God's almightiness is associated with the instrumentality of natural causes, and may be just as possibly,

if God pleases, in the moral world, associated with the instrumentality of moral causes.

To what purpose are laws and institutions and the preaching of the gospel, if God does nothing and can do nothing by their instrumentality? Are laws and institutions, and the ministry of reconciliation, only the empty attendant symbols of God's power? Does it correspond with the usage of revealed language, to ascribe instrumentality to the impotent signals and attendants of God's agency? Is it ever said that God inflicted the plagues of Egypt by Aaron's rod, or threw down the walls of Jericho by rams' horns? The analogy of scriptural use forbids the ascription of instrumental agency to the mere symbols of the presence and power of God. Nor have I been able to find any declaration in the Bible, that God regenerates by his own almighty power, without any instrumental agency. The scriptures teach abundantly, that God is the author of regeneration, and that it is the instantaneous effect of his omnipotence applied with a direct design to produce it; but the fact that he does it, and that it is an illustrious act of omnipotence, does not decide *how he does it*, much less that he does it by power only, without means; while all the passages which speak of the instrumentality of the word, prove that he does not regenerate by omnipotence alone, but by power associated with the reading and especially the preaching of the word.

With this view of the subject correspond all the implications of the Bible. If the gospel pos-

sesses no adaptation to secure in any way, as a means in the hand of God, the renovation of the heart, whence the transcendant excellence and importance attached to it, and the high perniciousness and criminality of error, and why is the mighty power of God manifest only in alliance with revelation? Is the truth of God a mere arbitrary association of particular opinions with particular acts of God's power? It cannot be. The testimony of the Bible is express the other way.

There is, however, in our church, no need of controversy on the subject, and no room for it.

It is not claimed that God regenerates by the truth without an interposition of the exceeding greatness of his own power—and without denying the Confession and Catechisms, it cannot be denied that, what is accomplished in effectual calling, is accomplished by his word and Spirit.

That God is able by his direct immediate power to approach the mind in every faculty, and to touch all the springs of action and affection, I have never denied or doubted. And that he is able by the direct interposition of his power, so to rectify the mind of man as disordered by the fall, as that the consequence would be the immediate, unperverted exercise of the will and affections in obedience, is just as evident as that God can create minds in such a condition that they will in these respects go right from the beginning—and that in this manner he does retrieve the consequences of the fall, in respect to those who die in infancy, would seem to be as evident, as that he

saves them at all. That he is able, also, if it seemed good in his sight, to reveal the truth and manifest himself savingly to the heathen, is as plain as that he could reveal the same truths to holy men of old, and make them effectual through a written word and established ordinances. Nor is it denied or doubted, in respect to POSSIBILITY, that God, if it seemed wisest and best under the gospel, might make such manifestations of himself to the souls of men, attended by such energy of his almighty power, as would call them unfailingly into his kingdom.

The question, as we have said, is not a question of possible or impossible, but a question of FACT, as to the manner in which God does actually call effectually sinners into his kingdom—a question of wisdom and goodness in doing what is best in the best manner.

I have no sympathy for the opinion that it depends on sinners whether they be regenerated or not in the day of his power—or that God does all he can, and leaves the event of submission or not to rebel man—and that sinners make themselves to differ, and are in fact the self-determining authors of their own regeneration. The passages quoted to prove such an assertion are misunderstood and perverted.

The texts—'What could I have done more for my vineyard that I have not done in it,' and 'he could not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief,' and other kindred passages, do not teach that God is ever efficaciously resisted by any sinner whom he attempts to subdue, or that there is any sinner on earth so stubborn and obstinate, that God

could not reconcile him if it seemed good in his sight. The limitation is of God's unerring wisdom—and the cannot the same as when it is said he cannot deny himself, or cannot lie, or where God himself says—'though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be towards this people.'

The question, also, has respect not to extreme cases, but to the ordinary methods of his sovereign power in saving men; and here the Bible and Confession are express, that regeneration is accomplished by the word and Spirit of God.

Most assuredly it is the grammatical import and obvious meaning, and no doubt the true intent of our Confession and Catechisms, that what God accomplishes in effectual calling, he accomplishes by his word and Spirit—effectually calls '*by his word and Spirit*' out of that state of sin and death in which men are by nature. *By his word and Spirit* enlightening their minds savingly to understand the things of God. *By his word and Spirit* taking away the heart of stone, and giving a heart of flesh. *By his word and Spirit and almighty power* renewing their wills, and determining them to that which is good. *By his word and Spirit* inviting and drawing sinners to Christ, yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace. The Spirit of God maketh the reading and especially the preaching of the word, an effectual mean of convincing of sin and converting sinners, and building them up in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation.' How can that be an effectual mean of conversion which does

The 'word' embraces all God has revealed.

nothing, and only attends the display of God's omnipotence?

Is it demanded how God can make the word effectual by his Spirit in regeneration? I am not sure that the Bible, or the creeds, or standard writers, have explained exactly how the Spirit regenerates by the word, or that I shall be able to do justice to the representations which they have made. It is evident, however, that by 'THE WORD' and 'THE TRUTH,' is meant the whole revelation which God has made to man: including all the truths, motives, and ordinances of the Bible, and all the illustrative and corroborating influence of his providential government; comprehending the being, the attributes, the character, and the eternal counsel and law of God—the fall and total depravity of man—the developments of the Trinity, and plan of redemption by Jesus Christ; including his divine person, mediation, atonement, and the terms upon which justification and eternal life are offered, and the ordinances and means of commending these overtures of mercy to the consciences and hearts of men; including also the Spirit, his divine person, and work of revelation, illumination, and restraint, awakening and convincing, converting and sanctifying sinful men, to make them meet for heaven; and also the mingled influence of majesty and condescension, justice and mercy, and all the promises and threatenings, and hopes and fears attendant upon the discriminations of grace and justice—of death, and judgment, and eternity, associ-

ated with heaven and hell, according to the characters formed and the deeds done in the body.

Now, it is admitted by all orthodox creeds and writers, that there is a work preparatory and consequential to regeneration, which the Spirit does accomplish by the instrumentality of the word. It is called before regeneration, common grace; and after, sanctification. Nor is it difficult to see the adaptation of the word to the requisite preparatory work. The thing to be accomplished in regeneration is the restoration of the vagrant will and affections from the creature to the Creator—the turning from broken cisterns to God, the fountain of good. To accomplish this, the character and law of God need to be understood, the sinner's attention arrested, his sensibilities quickened, his conscience invigorated, and his sins set in order before him by the coming of the commandment; and it is easy to see how the word is powerful in its adaptation after regeneration, to sanctify and fit believers for heaven. The psalmist celebrates it as 'right, rejoicing the heart'—'pure, enlightening the eyes;' and our Saviour, in his intercessory prayer, for his disciples and people in all ages, prays, 'sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth.'

The only question is, whether God, by his Spirit, makes the word as effectual to regenerate, as he does to prepare the way, and to sanctify after regeneration. And is it a thing intuitively impossible that God, according to the language of our Confession and catechisms, should be 'pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call the predestinated

by his word and Spirit, out of a state of sin and death, in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; by his word and Spirit, enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly, to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Christ, yet so as they come freely, being made willing by his grace; in his accepted time, inviting and drawing them to Christ by his word and Spirit. The Spirit of God making the reading, but especially the preaching of the word an effectual mean of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith unto salvation?' Our standards, you perceive, are unequivocal in the declaration, that regeneration itself, as well as conviction and sanctification, is accomplished by the word and Spirit of God. It ascribes expressly the same instrumentality to the word, in regeneration, which it ascribes to it in conviction and sanctification. This, so far as I can judge, has been the prevalent doctrine of the church of God, in every age. Indeed it was one of the points of earnest controversy between Papist and Protestant, the one mistifying about the internal word, as a pretext for the sequestration of the Bible, the other asserting its instrumentality. Should the question be pressed, how the Spirit makes the word effectual in regeneration, the answer is:

Not by the truth and motives of the word, as God employs natural causes to produce their effects. It

is said expressly in our Confession, that he does not force the will, or determine it to good by any absolute necessity of nature, but that he doth persuade and enable men to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to them in the Gospel.

The mind is not a material substance, nor the means of its unperverted action natural causes; and to clothe the word, in the hand of the Spirit, with the power of a natural cause, from imagery borrowed from the natural world, is to materialize both the word and the soul. The heart is not literally a stone, nor the word of God a sword, or fire, or hammer, to break, or melt the stony heart. The meaning is that the Spirit somehow, by the word, both wounds and heals the soul, not as he would wound the body by a spear, and heal it by surgical application; but he does it by an instrumentality which may be fitly represented by such metaphorical analogies.

The Bible contains precisely that balanced exhibition of God—of the riches of his goodness—his majesty and his condescension—his love and his justice—his mercy, and his inexorable decision to punish the incorrigible—his long suffering and sudden vengeance—and so exhibits the glorious and dreadful discriminations of his justice and his grace, as makes it as perfect in its adaptation when brought home to the mind and heart to induce submission, as the commandment when commended by the Spirit, is to produce conviction, or the same exhibition made real by divine illumination to sanctify the believer; but

sin has darkened the mind, and the god of this world, and the sinner's own deceitful heart of enmity *keeps out this exhibition* as a matter of living reality—so that the natural man understandeth not by his own or any human endeavor the things of the kingdom of God. But as the Spirit commends the law to the sinner's conscience in conviction of sin as man cannot, and sanctifies by the truth his regenerated people, so 'all those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death, in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly, to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good; and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.' It is all dark to the sinner, and mournful, and terrible, till the Spirit makes the gospel a reality instinct with life.

Nor is it the *letter*—the simple naked *truth* as a mere matter of intellectual perception, which becomes effectual even in the hand of God. Facts and propositions do not contain and exhibit the whole truth contained in the Bible. It is a depository of divine feeling. From which flows the copious tide of God's love and hatred—his compassion and his justice—his mercy and his wrath—the meltings of his heart—the terrors of his power, and the energy

of his will. All the reality of divine feeling is expressed in the Bible; but the natural man understandeth it not—he reads the letter only which killeth. But it is the Spirit which giveth life—'the words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life, manifesting the truth and reality of divine feeling to the soul. While the sinner reads with darkened mind the sacred page, the Spirit makes it luminous, and quick, and powerful—it is as if written upon transparencies with invisible ink—unseen and unfelt, till the illumination of the Spirit throws it out in letters of fire.

Then the heavens illuminated declare the glory of God—and the inspired page shines with overpowering splendor. Both these united manifestations of the works and word of God, are celebrated in the 19th Psalm.

'The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun; which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple: the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.'

In accordance with these views of the proper instrumentality of the word in regeneration, is the testimony of Augustin, as quoted by Knapp.

'With respect to the manner in which saving grace operates, Augustin believed, that in the case of those who enjoy revelation, grace commonly acts by means of the word, or the divine doctrine, but sometimes *directly;* because God is not confined to the use of means. On this point there was great logomachy.' *Knapp's Theology*, vol. II. p. 457.

To the same purpose is the exposition by Calvin, of Hebrews iv. 12.—'*For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*'

'It is to be observed, that the apostle is here speaking of the word of God which is brought to us by the ministry of men. For these imaginations are silly and even pernicious, to wit, that the internal word indeed is efficacious, but that the word which proceeds from the mouth of man is dead and destitute of all effect. I confess, truly, that its efficacy does not proceed from the tongue of man, nor reside in the word itself, but that it is owing entirely to the Holy Spirit; nevertheless this is no objection to the idea that the Spirit puts forth his power in the preached word. For God, since he does not speak by himself, but by men, sedulously insists on this, lest his doctrine should be received contemptuously, because men are its ministers. Thus Paul, when he calls the

gospel the power of God, (Rom. i. 16.,) purposely dignifies his preaching with this title, because he saw that it had been slandered by some and despised by others. Moreover, when he calls the word *living*, its relation to men is to be understood, as appears more clearly in the second epithet; for he shows what this life is, when he then calls it *efficacious:* for it is the design of the apostle to show what the use of the word is in respect to us.' The words rendered *living* and *efficacious* in the above paragraph, are in the English version translated *quick* and *powerful.*

The following is the comment of Calvin on Romans x. 17.—'*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*'

'This is a remarkable passage concerning the efficacy of preaching, since it testifies that faith proceeds from it. He indeed confessed just before, that it accomplished no good by itself: but where it pleases the Lord to work, this is the instrument of his power. God by the voice of man acts efficaciously, and by his ministry creates faith in us. In this manner that Papal phantasm of implicit faith, which seperates faith from the word, falls to the ground.'

The Synod of Dort is unequivocal also in the doctrine of effectual calling by the word and Spirit.

'What, therefore, neither the light of nature nor the law could do, *that* God performs by the power of the Holy Spirit, through the word, or the ministry of reconciliation; which is the gospel concerning the Messiah, by which it hath pleased God to save believers, as well under the Old as under the New Testament.' *Scott's Synod of Dort*, p. 137.

'But in like manner, as by the fall man does not cease to be man, endowed with intellect and will, neither hath sin, which has pervaded the whole human race, taken away the nature of the human species, but it hath depraved and spiritually stained it; so even this divine grace of regeneration does not act upon men like stocks and trees, nor take away the proprieties (or properties, *proprietates*) of his will, or violently compel it while unwilling; but it spiritually quickens, (or vivifies,) heals, corrects, and sweetly, and at the same time, powerfully inclines it: so that whereas before it was wholly governed by the rebellion and resistance of the flesh, now, prompt and sincere obedience of the Spirit may begin to reign.' *Ibid.* p. 141.

'But in the same manner as the omnipotent operation of God, whereby he produces and supports our natural life, doth not exclude, but require the *use of means*, by which God in his infinite wisdom and goodness sees fit to exercise this his power: so this fore-mentioned supernatural power of God by which he regenerates us, in no wise excludes, or sets aside the use of the gospel, which the most wise God hath ordained as the seed of regeneration and the food of the soul. Wherefore, as the apostles, and those teachers who followed them, have piously instructed the people, concerning this grace of God, in order to his glory and to the keeping down of all pride; in the mean time neither have they neglected (being admonished by the holy gospel) to keep them under the exercise of the word, the sacraments, and discipline:

so then, be it far from us, that teachers or learners in the church should presume to tempt God, by separating those things, which God, of his own good pleasure, would have most closely united together. For grace is conferred through admonitions, and the more promptly we do our duty, the more illustrious the benefit of God, who worketh in us, is wont to be, and the most rightly doth his work proceed. To whom alone, all the glory, both of the means and their beneficial fruits and efficacy, is due for everlasting. Amen.' *Ibid.* p. 142.

Witsius—a standard writer in the church, says—'Regeneration is that supernatural act of God whereby a new and divine life is infused into the elect—persons spiritually dead—and that from the incorruptible seed of the word of God made fruitful by the infinite power of the Spirit.'

Witherspoon—one of the best standard writers in our church, and whose treatise on regeneration is the best written and the most judicious, scriptural, copious, accurate, and experimental dissertation upon that subject in the English language, speaking of the nature of regeneration, says—'As, therefore, the change is properly of a moral or spiritual nature, it seems to me properly and directly to consist in these two things, 1. That our supreme and chief end be to serve and glorify God, and that every other aim be subordinate to this. 2. That the soul rest in God as its chief happiness, and habitually prefer his favor to every other enjoyment.' p. 137.

The following passages imply the associated influence of means:

'The deplorable, and naturally helpless state of sinners, doth not hinder exhortations to them in scripture; and therefore, takes not away their obligation to duty. See an address, where the strongest metaphors are retained, the exhortation given in these very terms, and the foundation of the duty plainly pointed out. "Wherefore he saith, awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." From which it is very plain, that the moral inability under which sinners now lie, as a consequence of the fall, is not of such a nature as to take away the guilt of sin, the propriety of exhortations to duty, or the necessity of endeavors after recovery.

'But what shall we say? Alas! the very subject we are now speaking of, affords a new proof of the blindness, prejudice, and obstinacy of sinners. They are self-condemned; for they do not act the same part in similar cases. The affairs of the present life are not managed in so preposterous a manner. He that ploughs his ground, and throws in his seed, cannot so much as unite one grain to the clod; nay, he is not able to conceive how it is done. He cannot carry on, nay, he cannot so much as begin one single step of this wonderful process toward the subsequent crop; the mortification of the seed, the resurrection of the blade, and gradual increase, till it come to perfect maturity. Is it, therefore, reasonable, that he should say, I for my part can do nothing. It is, first and last, an effect of divine power and energy. And God can as easily raise a crop without sowing as

with it, in a single instant, and in any place, as in a long time, by the mutual influence of soil and season; I will therefore spare myself the hardship of toil and labor, and wait with patience, till I see what he will be pleased to send. Would this be madness? Would it be universally reputed so? And would it not be equal madness to turn the grace of God into licentiousness? Believe it, the warning is equally reasonable and equally necessary, in spiritual as in temporary things.' pp. 134, 135.

The authority of Owen is among the best of orthodox authorities. His language is as follows:

'We grant that in the work of regeneration, the Holy Spirit towards those that are adult, doth make use of the word, both the law and the gospel, and the ministry of the church, in the dispensation of it, as the ordinary means thereof; yea, this is ordinarily the whole external means that is made use of in this work, and an efficacy proper unto it, it is accompanied withal.'

'The power which the Holy Ghost puts forth in our regeneration, is such in its acting or exercise, as our minds, wills, and affections, are suited to be wrought upon, and to be affected by it, according to their natures, and natural operations. "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; draw me, and I shall run after thee." He doth neither act in them any otherwise than they themselves are meet to be moved and move, to be acted and act, according to their own nature, power, and ability. He draws us with "the cords of a man." And the work itself is expressed by

persuading, "God persuade Japhet;" and alluring, "I will allure her into the wilderness and speak comfortably:" for as it is certainly effectual, so it carries no more repugnancy unto our faculties, than a prevalent persuasion doth. So that he doth not, in our regeneration, possess the mind with any enthusiastical impressions; nor acteth absolutely upon us as he did in extraordinary prophetical inspirations of old, where the MINDS AND ORGANS OF THE BODIES OF MEN WERE MERELY PASSIVE INSTRUMENTS, MOVED BY HIM ABOVE THEIR OWN NATURAL CAPACITY AND ACTIVITY, NOT ONLY AS TO THE PRINCIPLE OF WORKING, BUT AS TO THE MANNER OF OPERATION.

'He therefore offers no violence or compulsion unto the will. This that faculty is not naturally capable to give admission unto. If it be compelled, it is destroyed.' *Owen's Works*, vol. 2, p. 371.

Howe is equally express on this subject, he says—'And whereas, therefore, in this work there is a communication and participation of the divine nature, this is signified to be his divine power. If you look to 2 Peter i. verses 3, 4, compared, "According as his divine power hath given us all things appertaining to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue; whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature." Here is a divine nature to be communicated and imparted in this great and glorious work. How is it to be communicated? It is true it must be by apt and suitable means; to wit, by the

great and precious promises given us in the gospel. But it must be by the exertion too of a divine power. Though God do work suitably to an intelligent nature when he works upon such subjects, yet he works also suitably to himself, "according as his divine power hath given us all things pertaining to life and godliness," or to the godly life; in order to the ingenerating the godly life his divine power hath given us by the exceeding great and precious promises, a divine nature. The instrumentality and subserviency of these "exceeding great and precious promises," is greatly to be considered, God working herein suitably to the nature of an intelligent subject. Here is a change to be wrought in his nature—a nature that is corrupt, depraved, averse from God, alienated from the divine life; this nature is now to be attempered to God, made suitable to him, made propense and inclined towards him. This might be done, it is true, by an immediate exertion of almighty power, without any more ado. But God will work upon men suitably to the nature of man. And what course doth he therefore take? He gives "exceeding great and precious promises," and in them he declares his own good will, that he might win theirs. In order to the ingenerating grace in them, he reveals grace to them by these great and precious promises. And what is grace in us? Truly grace in us is goodwill towards God, or good nature towards God; which can never be without a transformation of our vicious, corrupt nature. It will never incline towards God, or be propense towards God, till he make it so by a trans-

forming power. But how doth he make it so? By discovering his kindness and goodness to them in "exceeding great and precious promises," satisfying and persuading their hearts; I mean nothing but kindness towards you, why should you be unkind towards me? I am full of goodwill towards you, will you requite it with perpetual illwill, and everlasting enmity towards me? THUS THE "EXCEEDING GREAT AND PRECIOUS PROMISES" ARE INSTURMENTS TO THE COMMUNICATING A DIVINE NATURE TO US, THOUGH THAT DIVINE NATURE BE INGENERATED BY A MIGHTY POWER. God doth work at the rate of omnipotency in the matter, by the exertion of almighty power; but yet suitably to our nature, so as to express his mind, and kind design, and goodwill, by the exceeding great and precious promises contained in the gospel.

'And if it were not so, he might as well make use of any other means as the gospel, to work upon souls by. But the gospel is the word of his grace.'

There would seem to be the same evidence of instrumental action of the word as employed by the Spirit, which attends and evidences the direct efficacy of natural causes. How do we learn the existence and power of natural causes? We see not power itself, and infer it only from the uniformity with which the effect follows the the application of the cause. It never exists without it, and always attends its application. But the same evidence of instrumental influence attends the ministration of the word of God. As a general fact, no spiritual life commences in its absence, and always in some form of association with

its presence—and whatever may be the theory of ministers on the subject, they all pray at the close of their sermons, that God would make his word effectual—clothe it with power—make it quick and powerful. The fire and the hammer to break, and melt, and purify the heart.

Is the question still repeated, *how* does God make the word effectual in regeneration by his Spirit? That question belongs not to me, but to the Lord of the Bible; and has been long since asked of him, and answered by him. Nicodemus saith unto him, 'How can these things be?' And the answer was, '*The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*'

Does it seem to any to be impossible that God should savingly enlighten by his word and Spirit? and make 'the reading and especially the preaching of his word, an effectual mean of conviction and conversion?' It should be remembered, that many things are possible with God, which seem impossible to men. That our philosophy is not the counsel of his will, according to which he worketh all things—nor our capacity of comprehension the limit of God's almighty power. Where the lamp of our reason goes out, and far beyond what eye hath seen, or heart conceived—he holds on his eternal way in the great deep, and amid clouds and darkness, impenetrable to created mind. But in this unexplored and deep darkness—that he does a thing is the highest possible evidence of its rectitude—and that he has said a thing, the highest

possible evidence of its truth. On the ground, then, of divine declaration we rest our confidence, that God can make his word and Spirit an effectual means of the conviction and conversion of sinners.

IV. Why is the power of God necessary to regeneration? why may not argument and motive prevail on men to turn to God?

The power of God is not necessary because the will of man is forced, or by any absolute necessity of nature determined to evil. But it is necessary, because the bias to actual sin occasioned by the fall is such, as eventuates in a perverse decision of the will and affections, in respect to the chief good, inducing the preference of the creature to the Creator; and because, when this perverse decision is once made, the heart is fully set and incorrigible to all motive, and immutable in its way—to which is to be added, the power of habit resulting from the repetition of evil desire, and purpose, and gratification; and though altogether, they force not the will, nor decide it wrong by an absolute necessity of nature, or cancel obligation, or afford excuse; they do, nevertheless, render all means and efforts abortive, which are not made effectual by the special influence of the Holy Spirit.

During this aberration of the will and affections from God, there is nothing remaining to man which, by any possible culture, can become religion.

No emotions of the sublime, in view of the majesty of God, which become adoration: no admiration of the adaptation of his character and laws to good re-

sults, or of the gospel to sustain law and recover the lost, which produce holy complacency: no delicacy of taste, or tenderness of sensibility, which will expand and amplify into love: no pleasure in doing good rather than evil, which, by culture, can be made benevolence, embracing God with supreme, and his subjects with impartial good will: no patriotism which can be kindled into piety; and none of the natural affections which unite in tender ties the family, which become cords of love to draw back the heart from the creature to God: no amiableness and good nature, which inspire evangelical self-denial for Christ's sake; and no piety which so extends beyond the sphere of the senses as to feel for the sorrows of the soul and the woes of eternity: no power of intellect or urgency of conscience, or fear of punishment, as ever in the order of cause and effect eventuate in godly sorrow: nor is there any power of institutions or of doctrine, or argument or eloquence, which ever enlightens savingly, the dark mind, or wakes up the pulse of life in the dead soul. As I have said in my sermon on the native character of man, the discourse in which the chief evidence of my Pelagianism is supposed to be contained,—'All which is admirable in intellect, or monitory in conscience, or comprehensive in knowledge, or refined in taste, or delicate in sensibility, or powerful in natural affection, may be found in man as the result of constitution, or the effect of intellectual and moral culture: but religion is not found, except as the result of a special

divine interposition. The temple is beautiful, but it is a temple in ruins;—the divinity is departed, and the fire on the altar is extinct.'

It follows, therefore, that except a man be born again—be born from above—be born of the Spirit—be born of God, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

A few thoughts upon creeds in general, and our own Confession in particular, and I have done.

Creeds, it is well known, originated early, in the assaults of error upon fundamental truth, and were brought progressively, as collision and discrimination elicited the truth, into the well defined systems which we now possess.

The design was, and ever has been, to repel the innovations of fundamental error, and unite the faithful in Christ Jesus in fellowship and action, for the extension of his kingdom upon earth.

The right of men to associate for the maintenance and propagation of truth and worship in accordance with their understanding of the Bible, expressed in epitomised form, cannot be denied. It defrauds none of their rights of conscience to worship without creeds, who choose to do so, while it is essential to the liberty of conscience of those who desire to be associated in this manner; of which none will be likely to complain, but those who desire to make their own conscience the rule of other men's judgments. The efficacy of creeds to maintain the

purity of truth and the unity of the church, has been great. They have not, indeed, been omnipotent, in repelling the encroachments of error, or securing entirely the unity of the church: but it follows not from this, that they have been powerless. The question is not, how much they have failed to accomplish, but how much they have done, and what had been the condition of the church, without these memorials of anterior discussions and attainments. It must have been to theology like the blotting out of civilization by the northern barbarians, or the oblivion of all experience with each generation, consigning the world in religion and science to the impotency of an everlasting infancy.

Creeds have indeed been the occasion of controversy: but we might as well deplore the action of the atmosphere, because thunder-storms and tornadoes sometimes attend it. To the discussions of the reformation, we owe the emancipation of the world—the rights of free enquiry—the rights of conscience—the supreme authority of the Bible—the principles of its exposition, and the great principles of civil and religious liberty.

They were the battle begun—the conflict of mind with brute force—which will not terminate till the world is free. Our own independence is the fruit of it, and the overturnings which shake the world, and will shake it till knowledge and science cover the earth, are the consummation of that great conflict.

It was the creeds of the reformation, also, and the zeal of holy men for them, which held Protestant nations together against the combinations of despotic

force, and thus secured the permanent action of the great principles which were developed; and they have stood as the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, to break the force of temptation to apostacy, to strengthen in a period of declension the things that remain, and to become rallying points and means of a spiritual restoration. The thirty-nine articles have held the Episcopal church through all her periods of declension, adversity, and change; and though once almost a dead letter, are now powerfully instrumental in her glorious evangelical resurrection. So the standards of Scotland, and Geneva, and Germany, held their several churches like so many anchors, while the enemy came in like a flood, but are now the powerful means by which God is preparing to bring back their prosperity like the waves of the sea. In New England, where, for a little time, the creeds fell into a partial disrepute, they are coming into remembrance with renovated power and honor. They were, during half her history, established by civil and ecclesiastical law; and through the latter half, maintained the confidence and affections of the orthodox churches to an extent equal to what they have ever received any where. And though the ministry did not subscribe them as the condition of licensure or ordination, they were examined closely in respect to the doctrines and experimental religion they inculcate; and no man with Pelagian heresies in head, or heart, could any sooner get into the orthodox congregational churches of New England, than he could enter the Presbyterian church.

The Shorter Catechism, from generation to generation, has been taught in the families of the faithful, and was as uniform, and almost as venerated an inmate as the Bible. It was the knowledge that the doctrines of this catechism were the standard doctrines of the Presbyterian church, which made them willing to waive their denominational peculiarities of church order, and pour their floods of pious emigrants, and prayers and contributions into the Presbyterian churches at the west, without lifting a finger for a Congregational organization—a form so dear to them, that had it been assailed on their own territory, they would have laid life down in its defence. They gave up their own church order, in respect to the west, on the ground of evangelical expediency, and their confidence in the Presbyterian church as loving and maintaining the same doctrines as themselves. In the twenty-five years that I have plead the cause of the missions and institutions of the west, and in my last and most successful effort, I never heard, in a single instance the objection made, 'the money is going out of our own church to build up another denomination.' If it be true that there are any conspiring to change the standards of our church, I have a right to say, from what I know, that whoever the conspirators may be, they are not the ministers or churches of New England, nor those who emigrate from New England.

So far from changing or tampering with our standards, we are called on by an intensity of motive to hold them fast.

They were not at the time of their adoption newly

discovered truths—but the collected and well balanced results of all the anterior discussions and labors of the church of God. They were adjusted by men of talent, learning, and piety, and by the concurring wisdom and candor of so many minds, as precluded the favorite theories of any, and included the doctrines well defined, in which, amid known circumstantial discrepancies of opinion, they could cordially agree; thus forming an imperishable monument of unadulterated doctrine unmixed by theories, and at an equal remove from Pelagian laxness, and antinomian hyper Calvinism.

The Confession itself, and Catechisms, are made up of the most judicious, concise, and accurate deffinitions and descriptions of doctrine, experience, and practice, ever placed on record. Such as no single mind would have formed, or many minds without that marked providential supervision, which, in the same age that he gave us the Bible in a translation not to be rivalled, gave an epitome of its contents in symbols, which will carry down to the millennium the comprehensive suffrage of the faithful in Christ Jesus.

What we have now chief occasion to guard against is, the repetition of the faults of other days, in relying too exclusively on the letter of our creeds, to prevent apostacy, and perpetuate the purity and power of the church.

Experience has evinced that the generations of living men will govern the world in spite of any possible legislation of those who have passed away; and that the only way to perpetuate creeds and constitu-

tions is, to perpetuate that nurture and admonition of the Lord, which will make them as acceptable to the coming, as they are to the existing generation.

This is the import of the Proverb, that a living dog is better than a dead lion. It was in this respect that our Puritan fathers committed an oversight. The public sentiment of their day was so united and efficient, and their laws and creeds so well ordered and efficacious, that it seems scarcely to have occurred to them that they should not live forever, or that the impulse they had given to them would not carry them down through all generations. They fell, therefore, into an unseemly confidence in the short metre government of the family church and commonwealth by power, instead of the kind and winning influence of argument and affection, and that religious and moral culture by which God is accustomed to fashion aright the heart. The consequence was, that their creeds and ecclesiastical laws began to operate gradually upon necks and hearts unaccustomed to the yoke, until at length away went colleges, and creeds, and funds, and churches, and consecrated property, by the force of laws which the living made, in contravention of the sacred intentions of the dead.

There is a lesson which the church has been slow to learn, and yet must learn before her unbroken energies and cordial and united action can be thrown upon the world. It is the medium between requiring too little or too much. The mind of man is so constructed, that exact agreement in every thing cannot be secured by persuasion or by force. Even the

Romish church, with the world in chains and her foot upon the neck of nations, could by no force or terror prevent the free born mind from thinking, or compel it to exact unity of speculation, and much less can it be done now and in our nation. Ecclesiastical authority has lost its terrors, and civil coercion is unknown, and original investigation is the order of the day—proving all things, to hold fast that which is good. The result in any communion, of attempting a government of creeds, verbatim et literatum, would be formality and debility and endless divisions, on the one hand, and fanaticism on the other. The monitory voice of experience on this subject is loud and urgent. The stern exactions of the English church drove out the puritans, whose virtues she needed, and whose mildly administered order might have benefitted them; while the coerced separation produced the revolution, and the eccentric zeal of the commonwealth, and the formality, and heresy which attended the reaction.

A similar course of urgent restriction by creeds, and of impatient zeal bursting from it by revivals of extravagance and excess, passed over Germany, and prepared the way first for dead orthodoxy, and next for rationalism. And in the same manner did the heresy of church and state, in the time of Whitfield and the Tenants produce separations and excess, which made the one fanatical, to the disgrace of revivals, for half a century, and the other cold and formal, till, in leaning away from zeal without knowledge, they fell first into dead orthodoxy, which

was followed next by the Pelagian, and Arian, and Arminian heresies.

For many years, our own church has rested from these collisions and alternations of ultra zeal. United by the comprehensive, cordial subscription to the doctrines of our Confession, 'as containing the system of doctrines taught in the holy scriptures,' implying a bona fide agreement in the fundamental doctrines, as they have been brought out in the controversies of the church, and expounded in opposition to Arian, and Unitarian, and Papal, and Pelagian errors, but never intended or understood as expressing an exact agreement in speculations or language on any subject. On the contrary, those who framed the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, and those who adopted them as the bond of union to our church, differed in speculation and phraseology on some of the same points that the sons of the church differ about now; but never, till recently, have they been made the ground of formal accusations of heresy, and regular ecclesiastical animadversion. And now the question cannot be, whether one side or the other shall be expelled from the church, as hypocrites and heretics. We came in on both sides with the knowledge of these circumstantial varieties of opinion and language, and in every form of recognition were made welcome, and assured of the protection of the church; and on neither side can we be stigmatized or expelled, without a breach of covenant and the action and injustice of ex post facto laws.

The only question is, whether we will dissolve

partnership; or attempt its continuance upon the new conditions of exact agreement in speculation and language on every subject, as well as on fundamental doctrine. Whether the exposition of the Confession which I have given, on the subject of the natural ability of man, as a free agent, and his moral inability, as a totally depraved sinner; of original sin, as including federal liability to the curse of the law, and as operating to the production of actual sin, not by force upon the will, or any absolute necessity of nature determining it to evil, but by an effectual, universal bias to actual sin; and of regeneration as a change of character, produced not by omnipotent action alone, but by the immediate and infallible influence of God's word and Spirit: whether the exposition of these doctrines, sustained by the language of the Confession, and corroborated by unbroken exposition from the primitive church to this day—confirmed in the line of the most approved Presbyterian expositors, Calvin, Turretin, and Witherspoon, and the great balance of biblical critics and expositors, shall be reversed and stigmatized as heresy; and the *imprimatur* of the church be given to the doctrine that man possesses no ability of any kind to obey the gospel—that original sin forces and determines the will to actual sin, by an absolute necessity of nature—that adult total depravity is involuntary, and the result of a constitution acting by the power of a natural and necessary cause—and that regeneration is a change of the natural constitution, by the direct omnipotence of the

Spirit, without any influential agency of the word of God. Such an exposition, the church, if it seem good to her, has the power of making; but not the right of giving to her exposition a retrospective action, to affect character and ecclesiastical standing, and vested rights.

But the time hastens, as it would seem, when our church must decide, whether the examples of past abortive effort for exact identity in speculation and language, with all their mournful consequences, shall be for our warning, or for our example, and whether the coming fifty years shall be years of schism, and impotency, and confusion worse confounded; or whether, like a band of brothers, we shall move on under the same auspices which hitherto have concentrated in our church the energies of the East, and the West, and the North, and the South, till our victorious efforts, with those of other denominations, who love our common Lord, shall, under his guidance and power, terminate in the universal victories of the latter day. And never was there a moment when a little panic of alarm, or impatience of feeling may turn for good or for evil, the life-giving or destroying waters of such a flood down through distant generations.

The consequences of new and more restricted terms of communion are too legible in past experience, and too manifest to unerring anticipation, to need labored exposition or fervent expostulation. And nothing assuredly could precipitate our beloved church upon the disastrous alternative, but such an

abandonment of heaven as we do not believe in; and such a consequent infatuation of alarm and violence of passion, as would disregard alike both argument and expostulation, and with closed eye and deafened ear rush upon distruction. An event which we cheeringly believe his mercy will avert.

The means of our preservation are obvious and easy.

There will be, in a church so extensive as our own, unavoidably some diversities of doctrinal phraseology in our communications—theological provincialisms of men alike warmhearted in their belief in the doctrinal and experimental views of our standards. These, as they pass from one department of the church to another, we must not attempt to compel by force to change the dialect by which, from maternal lips, the truth was breathed into their infant minds, and made effectual in their conversion, and made sacred by the association of theological instruction.

Such sudden unclothings of thought, for new and unaccustomed habiliments, are impossible. And yet, patience and kindness on the part of the presbyteries and fathers of the church, will easily secure to all the purposes of edification—an assimilation which years of discourtesy and contention cannot compel.

We ought, indeed, to speak the same *things;* but this means not the same words, but the same doctrines. Our Confession and Catechisms were intended as concise definitions, and not as furnishing the entire vocabulary of words, in which their doctrines shall be

preached. The Bible, itself, does not confine us to its own phraseology; otherwise all exposition and preaching would be superseded by the simple reading of the Bible. And yet, where the terms of the Confession are grateful, and the language of a strange dialect the occasion of misconception and fear, I would not purposely offend or fail to edify, by finding out acceptable words; but, as Paul would do, become all things to all men, that if possible I might save some. Much less would I speak slightly of our creeds, and the phrases which time and association had rendered dear to the people of God. But I should expect, in return, in my own congregation, the same liberty of speech which I accorded to others, and the same deference of courtesy to familiar phrases, and cherished associations which I practised; and with a conciliatory spirit, and a small share of common sense and good manners, the church from end to end might be quiet from all agitation on the subject.

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